A
TALE OF THE TIMES.

BY
THE AUTHOR OF A GOSSIP'S STORY.

DEDICATED BY PERMISSION TO MRS. CARTER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

Nor then the pile of hope God's mercy rear'd,
By vain philosophy be e'er destroy'd:
Eternity, by all or wish'd or fear'd,
Shall be by all or suffer'd or enjoy'd.
MASON's *Elegy on the Death of Lady Coventry.*

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR T. N. LONGMAN AND O. REES,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.



A

TALE OF THE TIMES.

CHAP. XVIII.

O how canſt thou renounce the boundleſs ſtore
  Of charms which Nature to her vot'ry yields!
The warbling woodland, the reſounding ſhore,
  The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
  All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the ſong of even,
  All that the mountain's ſheltering boſom ſhields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,
O how canſt thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!

BEATTIE.

THE intereſt which the appearance and behaviour of Mr. Powerſcourt had excited in lord Monteith's mind had more permanence than the ſudden emotions to which his diſpoſition was ſubject commonly poſſeſſed. His evaneſcent im-

pulses might generally be compared to the impression which a stone makes upon the clear surface of a glassy lake, which, after having formed a few tremulous circles, soon resumes its natural tranquillity. But on the present occasion he thought of his good-tempered rival, as he termed him, during most part of his journey to Scotland, and, as neither a whistle nor a song would always excite new ideas, he frequently expressed himself anxious to know whether the poor fellow had shot himself: "Yet I protest, "my dear Geraldine," he added, "I "do not laugh at him; for, upon my "soul, if I were as miserable as he "seems to be, I should think of nothing "but driving out Cupid's arrows with "a brace of bullets."

As lady Monteith's endeavours to divert her lord from suspecting Mr. Powerscourt's attachment had proved in-

ineffectual, ſhe determined, by that full confidence which Mrs. Evans had recommended, to remove every ſubject of ſelf-condemnation from her own heart. After having bound his honour by a promiſe of ſecreſy, ſhe delivered to him the letters with which I concluded the laſt Chapter; and ſhe entreated him, as the affair was too ſerious for levity, to avoid the diſtreſſing ſubject in their future converſations.

Lord Monteith was a ſtranger to that "green-eyed monſter which mocks the meat it feeds on." The preference his lady had recently given him was too avowed, and her conduct, as well as her principles, too correct to raiſe ſuſpicion even in the heart of a Leontes. On the contrary, Mr. Powerſcourt's behaviour excited his warm eſteem; and his frank open diſpoſition compelled him to exclaim, "I cannot think, Geraldine, why

"you preferred me to that noble fellow,
"I hope he will live to come back to
"England, that I may thank him for
"giving me happiness at the expence of
"his own repose. Let me tell you
"very few young fellows of my ac-
"quaintance would have acted as he has
"done."

"I hope," said the countess, while heart-felt pleasure lighted up all the charms of her intelligent face, "that I
"shall have the satisfaction of presenting
"two friends to each other, highly de-
"serving of mutual confidence. You
"see I have requested Henry's corre-
"spondence; you, my lord, must permit
"me to communicate it to you; your
"superior knowledge of the character
"of your own sex will enable me to dis-
"cover whether his travels are conducive
"to his repose; and you will assist my
"replies by pointing out such topics as

"will

" will prove moſt effectual in promoting " this end, ever remembering that the " eſteem and gratitude I now feel for " him muſt be ſubſervient to the ſtronger " attachment whence they originated."

Such were the ſentiments of lady Monteith; and ſuch is the conduct upon which the muſe of hiſtory and the muſe of fiction alike delight to dwell. The uncorrupted mind avows its divine original, by recurring with ſecret complacency to the portrait of what is perfect, fair, and good. Though the depravity of modern manners may obtain tranſient amuſement from thoſe highly-coloured ſcenes of guilt which the judgment condemns, the ſoul only finds conſtant gratification in contemplating the lovely pictures of innocence and virtue.

When I recollect that the ſubſequent events of this hiſtory will lead my narrative through many a painful ſcene, I

ſeem to ſhrink with reluctance from the diſguſting taſk of deſcribing ſyſtematic villany-mining the outworks which decorum and religion have placed around female virtue, while the unſuſpecting heart becomes entangled by ſatanic guile and inbred vanity. I feel that the part moſt analogous to my taſte, as well as to my powers, would be to depicture the amiable features of the human character ſhaded only by thoſe lighter traits of frailty from which the moſt perfect ſtandard of human goodneſs is not exempt. But, knowing that the unchriſtian morals of the preſent age ſtrain their affected charity till they embrace vice, while the moſt glaring enormities are gloſſed over by delicate ſubterfuges; and refined liberality expatiates on the goodneſs of the heart, while its poſſeſſor breaks every precept in the decalogue; I feel ſtimulated by an ardent, though perhaps

perhaps injudicious zeal, to lend my feeble aid to ſtop the torrent of enthuſiaſtic ſentiment which daringly menaces that heaven-erected edifice that is predicted to ſurvive the wreck of worlds.

Impreſſed with this idea, I conceive it poſſible to ſerve the cauſe of principle, by ſhowing through what devious unſuſpected paths the human heart may be led to error; how eaſily it may, by youthful indiſcretion, be hurried down the ſteep deſcent, till, Hazael-like, it ſinks into the infamy which it once ſhuddered to name. Yet, retaining too much native purity to be reconciled to its degraded ſtate, and too much ſenſibility to ſtifle reflection, it ſhrinks from life as from an inſupportable burden; and the morning which roſe in ſplendor is clouded by inſuperable gloom before it attains its meridian brightneſs.

If in the execution of this deſign the pencil ſhould fail, let Candour remember the intention, and excuſe the unſkilful painter. Perhaps the imperfect outline may induce ſome ſuperior genius, more converſant with life and manners, to execute the inſtructive ſubject with all the glowing energy that its importance requires.

I ſhall gratify my own taſte by dwelling a little longer on that part of lady Monteith's hiſtory, when, unaſſailed and happy, ſhe ſpread delight and comfort all around her, and her own heart derived an allowable gratification from the conſciouſneſs of deſerved applauſe. The firſt four years of her married life were unembittered by reſtleſs anxiety, corroding diſappointment, or the ſtill keener pangs of ſelf-accuſation. But, leſt my readers ſhould ſuppoſe that I am now falſifying my own maxims, I ſhall exhibit

hibit a curfory view of that period which, though it did not include any great forrows or marked deviations from rectitude, ftill bore fome fainter marks of the penalty of Adam.

When the young countefs arrived at Monteith, fhe was aftonifhed at the cruel ravages which time and negligence had made in that venerable pile. Its native magnificence, the fublime features of the adjacent fcenery, every fpot of which feemed by fome traditionary anecdote connected with her lord's family, and the attachment which the peafantry, notwithftanding their extreme wretchednefs, expreffed for the defcendants of their old mafters, kindled in her mind an agreeable enthufiafm, and fhe rejoiced in a diftinction which feemed capable of uniting her own individual happinefs with the general good. Though fhe continued to think that lady Made-

lina carried her ideas of hereditary consequence to a ridiculous extent, a generous heart would find a fair field to gratify its noblest passions in the supremacy of a wide domain. She seemed never weary of wandering through the romantic scenery. "Here," said she, as she one day rested on the slope of a green hill, over-hung by a pine-clad precipice, "I will build a neat little village. The houses shall all be white; "there shall be a garden to each, and a "residence in this agreeable spot shall "be the reward conferred upon such of "my lord's tenants as seem to fulfil "their duties with marked propriety. "I will frequently visit them; I will be "their legislator, their instructor, their "physician, and their friend. They "shall look up to me with gratitude, "and my own heart shall enjoy the pure "recompence of conscious beneficence."

In

In the improvements which ſhe planned at the caſtle, the ſame ſocial and benevolent ſpirit prevailed, though here perhaps it received a more worldly teint from the dangerous approximation of vanity. "Theſe rooms," ſaid ſhe, "if "embelliſhed in the grand Gothic ſtyle, "will ſhame the feeble glitter of mo- "dern frippery. Every article of fur- "niture ſhall be maſſy and ſubſtantial, "and convey an idea of general uſeful- "neſs rather than a ſelfiſh deſire of ex- "hibiting the cold enjoyments of unim- "parted wealth. My lord's fortune is "ample; I have made to it a conſiderable "addition: how infinitely ſhall I prefer "ſpending it upon this ſpot, which has "a local claim to our preference, to "ſquandering it in the unvarying round "of a London life! Here, without feel- "ing the pain of competition, expence "may be juſtified by the motive of em-

"ploying induſtry and diffuſing plea-
"ſure. I will cultivate the eſteem of
"all my neighbours by the moſt winning
"attentions. The peculiarities which
"entitle me to pre-eminence ſhall not
"give them uneaſineſs, becauſe they
"ſhall be uniformly exerted for their
"pleaſure or amuſement. Here, with-
"out obſervation or interruption, I may
"purſue my plan of influencing lord
"Monteith's taſte, till it gradually aſſi-
"milates to my own. Lady Arabella's
"predilection for a London life, and her
"acknowledged influence over her aunt,
"prevent me from fearing that my
"ſchemes will be fruſtrated by the pre-
"ſence of thoſe whom I cannot propi-
"tiate and wiſh not to offend. Diſtance
"may, perhaps, diſarm their prejudices;
"and when perſonal competition is re-
"moved, the repreſentative of their fa-
"mily may receive thoſe commenda-

" tions to which kindred or friendſhip
" never can aſpire."

The plans of lady Monteith would have proved abortive, had ſhe not been aſſiſted by two powerful coadjutors. Lord Monteith's natural diſpoſition was violently diſpoſed to the purſuit of rural ſports and athletic exerciſes. The mountains, lakes, and foreſts which ſurrounded his caſtle, promiſed the diverſions of fiſhing and hunting in full perfection; and the neighbouring gentry had endeavoured to enliven a thinly-inhabited country by the eſtabliſhment of an aſſembly, a bowling meeting, and a cricket match, which returned at ſtated intervals. The Monteiths honoured the firſt-mentioned amuſement with their preſence very ſoon after their arrival at the caſtle; and, though the company exhibited but a miniature reſemblance to the circles in which they

had

had lately moved, they both received pleaſure from the events of the evening. Two circumſtances contributed to his lordſhip's ſatisfaction; he felt himſelf perfectly at eaſe; and, moreover, he received information, that the neighbouring country afforded what is termed a ſet of very hearty fellows, and the fineſt grouſe and black game in the kingdom. His pleaſure at this intelligence was ſo great, that while they returned home, he interrupted his lady's obſervations on the female part of the company, by declaring, that ſince he found things ſo agreeable, he really believed he ſhould ſpend a good deal of time at Monteith. "I think, Geraldine," ſaid he, "I cannot be very dull. What do "you think? I ſhall hunt one day, fiſh "another, go to the bowling-green a "third; then there will be a cricket "match, and ſhooting, and public "dinners,

" dinners, and private parties; and then " going to Edinburgh if any particu- " lar bufinefs is on foot, and making " excurfions through the neighbouring " counties. I declare I begin to think " as your father does, that it will be a " very rational life, and quite as agree- " able as fpending all our time in thofe " ftate-trappings of which Arabella is " fo fond. She faid that I fhould deteft " Scotland in a month; but I will con- " vince her that I can be happy any " where. Don't you think fo too, my " love? You will like to live here, " fhall you not?"

" O! infinitely, I affure you; I was " both furprized and pleafed with the " manners of feveral of the ladies whom " I met at the affembly. They feemed " indeed a little confufed and referved " at firft, and certainly they are un- " acquainted with the more refined

" modifications of politeneſs; but many " of them appeared well-informed, and " I know they will improve upon ac- " quaintance. I have projected a thou- " ſand little ſchemes to inſpire con- " fidence and cordiality. I am ſure the " dear old caſtle may ſoon be made " perfectly comfortable; and I hope, " my lord, our reſidence among your " tenants and dependants will prove an " eſſential benefit to them."

" I ſhall, certainly, order my ſteward " to give them the preference upon " every occaſion which promiſes a " lucrative advantage."

" Is it impoſſible for us to extend " our utility further? Could I not en- " dow a ſchool, and introduce ſome " branch of manufacture to employ the " children and the women? I am told " that they are extremely uninformed, " and in ſome reſpects uncivilized. I

" have

"have fancied that this may be owing "to the narrow ſtipend of the preſbyter, "whoſe poverty will not permit him to "exert that inflence over his flock, or "to pay them that attention which "the intereſts of morality and religion "require. A ſmall addition to his "ſtipend would not be felt by us, and "would probably do more for the "general improvement of manners in "the neighbourhood than would be "effected by a much larger expenditure "any other way. I ſee, my lord, you "ſmile; but allow me as well as your-"ſelf to quote my father's authority. "He has frequently obſerved, that by "enlarging Mr. Evans's ſphere of uſe-"fulneſs, he did an act of public bene-"ficence. 'I only thought,' he uſed to "ſay, 'of making one worthy man "happy; but ſince Mr. Evans has been

'relieved

" relieved from the preſſure of want, he
" has made many men happy, aye and
" worthy too.'

" Why there may be ſomething in
" what ſir William obſerves, provided
" one could but be ſure of having an
" Evans to deal with. But I ſhall have
" no leiſure for ſchemes of this kind;
" ſo you may amuſe yourſelf with them
" when you have no other employment.
" You may ſet up ſchools, portion off
" young girls, and enrich old divines.
" But, remember, no manufactories
" in my neighbourhood.—All our fa-
" mily hate the very name of them.—
" They only encourage a horde of idle
" inſolent vagrants, who fly in your
" face upon every occaſion."—

" Not if care be taken to improve
" their morals in proportion to their
" affluence. You ſee how thinly your

"villages are peopled, and what ex-
"treme poverty the general appearance
"of the country befpeaks."

"It will be very different when I
"fpend my fortune among them. The
"repairs of the caftle will employ the
"men."

"But the women and children?"

"O they fhall be fed at the caftle
"gate."

"No; let them eat the bread of in-
"duftry, and enjoy thofe delights
"which the active exertion of our
"native energies always infpires.
"Sweet is the food which is earned
"by labour. When you, my lord,
"purfue health and pleafure in the
"fields and woods, and return home to
"tafte the repofe which is procured by
"exertion, and to partake of the dain-
"ties for which you are indebted to
"your own toil, you feel this maxim

"true;

" true; and your heart will exult at the " idea, that your provident benevolence " has extended ſimilar enjoyments to " hundreds, who muſt long need the " protecting care of their benefac- " tor, and conſequently cannot affect " an inſolent independence on his " bounty."

Perhaps lord Monteith's principal objections to his lady's ſchemes were, that he ſhould be involved in ſome trouble by the execution of them. Her judicious alluſion to his favourite purſuits in the preceding ſpeech, and the proſpect of the honour being wholly his, while he determined that the difficulties ſhould be excluſively hers; theſe reaſons, added to ſome ſecret ideas that if the plan anſwered it would be another triumph over the prejudices of his obſtinate aunts, procured his acquieſcence, and he uttered the words,

" You ſhall do as you pleaſe, only don't " teaze me about it," juſt as the chariot paſſed over the draw-bridge which led to the caſtle.

CHAP. XIX.

Say, ſhould the philoſophic mind diſdain
That good which makes each humble boſom vain?
Let ſchool-taught pride diſſemble all it can,
Theſe little things are great to little man;
And wiſer he, whoſe ſympathetic mind
Exults in all the good of all mankind.
GOLDSMITH.

THE *ſang froid* with which lord Monteith always treated every ſcheme not immediately connected with his own pleaſures, frequently communicated a ſevere pang to the liberal mind of the counteſs. Her delicacy was hurt at the groſs character of his amuſements, and her vanity was piqued by perceiving that the tenacioufneſs of long indulged habit would not yield to the faſcination of her refined accompliſhments. Like Deſdemona, ſhe was "an excellent muſician, and could ſing the ſavage-neſs

nefs out of a bear." Her mellifluous voice and fweet-toned harp ftill retained all their exquifite power of transfufing harmony and delight into her hufband's foul, while the early horn or the convivial appointment called him from the fyren in vain. But if fhe fought to lead his attention to the blooming wildernefs of fweets planted by her hand, or the fcarcely lefs glowing garland created by her pencil, he inftantly recollected fome infurmountable engagement which required every moment of his time. She was equally unfortunate if fhe attempted to intereft him in the hiftory of her colony, as fhe termed her neat little white village; or if, opening the ftores of her capacious mind, fhe fought to difcufs fome topic of literary tafte, her arguments might be brilliant, but unlefs they were compreffed within the ftricteft rules of Spartan brevity, her lord

lord was either difcovering the wit of his fpaniel, or had fallen faft afleep.

Yet his heart was juft to her merits, and his tongue fo copious in her praife, that he was fometimes inclined to thruft in the agreeable fubject without proper preparation. He was confidered by all who vifited at the caftle to be a moft perfect paragon of connubial merit; and lady Monteith was as univerfally pronounced to be a happy woman, with which opinion I am inclined to coincide, notwithftanding that the power of Gyges' magic ring, invariably poffeffed by all novel writers, has enabled me to peep behind the curtain, and to fee the corroding forrow which a prudent wife will not only conceal from public obfervation, but even withhold from the knowledge of her bofom friend.

My young female readers, whofe notions of nuptial felicity are drawn from

the

the delufive pages of a circulating library, will ftart at the harfh tenet which feems to affirm, that a great number of married ladies may affign caufes for difcontent of a feverer nature than what fometimes affected the tranquillity of the blooming Geraldine. Fearful left they fhould fuppofe my doctrine ambiguous, or imagine that the happinefs of the lady was wholly owing to the amiable conftitution of her own mind, I will very plainly tell them, that, though caufes for vexation occafionally occurred, lafting unhappinefs in fuch a fituation could only proceed from a difcontented, ill-regulated temper, or a perverted judgment, which, inftead of forming an eftimate of life as it really is, erects a fallacious ftandard, by which it decides upon what is due to its own deferts, and how far others act as they ought. Reverfe this laft fentence, and

let the fair ſcrutinizer of her huſband's faults contemplate the errors of her own behaviour; let her recollect the duties ſhe has heedleſsly omitted, and the provocations ſhe has undeſignedly given; and let her then uſe the experience ſhe derives from ſelf-examination in her eſtimate of the conduct of her partner. After making ſome deductions for the ſtronger temptations to which the other ſex are expoſed by their more impetuous paſſions and blunter feelings, the early indulgence of their humours which their manners in early youth permit, and their hereditary notions of ſuperiority derived from Adam; I ſay, ſhe will then, perhaps, juſtly refer the apparent neglect or cruel unkindneſs which had juſt extorted her tears, to ſomething of buſineſs, which "had puddled his clear temper," and ſent him home rather with an expectation of having his humours

humours soothed by feminine softness, than of offering at the shrine of feminine susceptibility those attentions which fit the bridal state.

The sensibility of lady Monteith's disposition prevented her from viewing the defects in her lord with the indifference which a mind of common refinement would have experienced. But to the qualities of refinement and sensibility, so generally fatal to female peace, Geraldine united a strong attachment to her husband, natural sweetness of temper, and correct notions of the human character, derived from her early intimacy with Mrs. Evans. The precepts of that excellent monitress, now strengthened by conviction of their propriety, frequently recurred to her mind, prevented her from adopting the language of complaint, opened her eyes to the agreeable part of her situation,

and transferred her attention to what her own duty required from her, till native complacency and habitual affection reſtored all the ſprightly energies of her mind.

Under her preſiding influence Monteith caſtle realized to the idea of every beholder the delightful viſion of Spenſer's Bower of Bliſs, governed by a Una inſtead of an Acraſia. Magnificence was united with urbanity, hoſpitality was gilded by elegance, while the preſiding enchantreſs ſoftened her enviable ſuperiority in beauty, wealth, wit, and talents, by the moſt unaffecting condeſcenſion, and amiable attention to the accommodation of her gueſts. If her taſte in drawing extorted admiration from thoſe young ladies who were juſt trying to acquire the rudiments of the ſcience, the pain of that ſentiment was immediately ſoftened by her ready offer

of

of furnifhing them with crayons, pencils, fubjects to copy fuperior to what the country afforded, or affiftance from the mafter who occafionally attended her. Her tuneful voice and magic touch could not be imparted; but fhe had fongs and mufic books at every one's fervice, and fhe was very willing to affift in affording all the mechanical aid which that enchanting fcience admits. She had acquired a knowledge of all fafhionable works, and here again inftruction and materials only waited to be required. Her library, her confervatory, and her hot-houfe attracted general attention, and transfufed general pleafure, becaufe their refpective treafures were not kept merely to gratify the oftentation of the poffeffor, but were permitted to impart their mental riches and odoriferous fweets to any who wifhed to read a book or cultivate

an off-ſet. Adhering to the rule, that beauty is beſt attired when robed by ſimple elegance, ſhe had no temptation to be guilty of the temerity of attracting envy by the ſplendor of her ornaments; and the expence ſpared from her own dreſs was employed in judicious preſents to thoſe of her young friends whoſe circumſtances would ill ſupport the coſt of genteel appearance. To crown this fair aſſemblage of complacent graces, her exquiſitely playful wit, while it dazzled by its brilliancy, prevented by its innoffenſive ſweetneſs the moſt irritable mind from charging it with ſarcaſtic ſeverity.

Her village flouriſhed. She had named it James-town, in honour of her lord, to whoſe liberality ſhe properly referred every improvement of which ſhe was the directing ſoul. The neighbouring peaſantry were emulous

to become inhabitants of a ſpot which poſſeſſed ſo many local advantages; and a ſpirit of order and improvement was gradually introduced. The melancholy highlander no longer watched his few ſtarved ſheep on the bleak mountain, and for want of occupation ſoothed his ſorrows with a bagpipe. One of his younger boys performed that office, while "he earned bread for his infants and health for himſelf," in ſhaping the green allies of Monteith, covering the bleak mountains with plantations of Scotch pine and American oak, or digging the foundations of the new buildings, which were continually added to James-town. Beſide a neat edifice appropriated to divine worſhip, it poſſeſſed a carpet manufactory, a ſpinning room, a village ſchool, and a market-houſe. Perſons properly qualified were placed at the head of each inſtitution, and the

taſte of the boys was to be conſulted in their future deſtination, while the occupations of fiſhing, agriculture, and weaving, ſolicited their choice. The views of the girls were more circumſcribed; but by being early taught the occupations of ſpinning and knitting, and by having a market opened for the ſale of their productions, they were relieved from the burden of indolence, and the cheerleſs proſpect of being a uſeleſs weight upon their future huſbands, or dependant upon their caprice for every article of ſupport. It was lady Monteith's favourite amuſement to take a morning excurſion to James-town, and to introduce her female viſitants to the young ſeminary which flouriſhed under her care; and it frequently happened, that ſome yellow-haired laſſie diſplayed ſufficient abilities to induce one of the counteſs's gueſts to transfer her from the

taſk

taſk of ſinging at her wheel, to the enviable employment of clear-ſtarching the lady's "kerchiefs;" and helping "to buſkin her."

Yet even the exertions of liberal benevolence will not always afford a pure delight; the liberal mind muſt ſeek its ſureſt reward in the conſcious diſcharge of an acknowledged duty, and not in the perfect gratitude nor the complete ſatiſfaction of the objects it labours to benefit. Though the inhabitants of Jamestown were ſelected from the moſt deſerving part of lord Monteith's tenants, it does not follow that they were quite exempt from the failings of humanity. The houſes were all neat and comfortable; but as the counteſs had amuſed herſelf by conſtructing them after various models, it might happen that dame Brown would think gaffer Campbell's the more convenient, while the gaffer

for a ſimilar reaſon preferred that inhabited by the dame. Lady Monteith, indeed, conſented to their exchanging dwellings; but then another inconvenience aroſe; Margery Bruce complained that a window in dame Brown's houſe overlooked her, and that if the ſaid window were not walled up, ſhe could not live; for that the dame took her ſtation at that window, and, inſtead of minding her work, did nothing but watch the conduct of the aggrieved deponent. Dame Brown's rejoinder was, that Margery was ſuſpected to be no better than ſhe ſhould be; that ſhe had lately got a new plaid and kirtle, nobody knew how; and ſhe thought it her duty to mind her goings on, leſt her good lady ſhould be impoſed upon by an unworthy pretender to her favours. The fair judge found it difficult to decide in a queſtion of ſuch nice morality; and

and the more so, as the village was ſplit into two nearly equal factions, part enliſting under the banners of the watchful Brown, and part eſpouſing the cauſe of the aggrieved Margery.

Beſide the perplexity which caſes ſimilar to the above often excited, lady Monteith had to contend with other inconveniencies. The power of local attachment is very ſtrong in people who have paſſed their lives on one ſpot, without having had much intercourſe with the reſt of the world; and ſhe often found that the old Highlander preferred "the hill that lifted him to the ſtorms," to all the advantages which, while untried, his imagination annexed to the ſheltered cultivated valley. The manners of the ſouthern ſtrangers, whom the ornamental embelliſhments of Monteith had introduced among the new colony, did not aſſimilate with his pre-

conceived ideas of ſubmiſſion, œconomy, and ſelf-command. Though invited to partake of the luxuries his new neighbours introduced, his affection for ſour-crout and crowdy was inſurmountable, and his retired ſolitary humour ſhrunk from the loquacious interruptions of ſociety. He frequently found that he had renounced pleaſures congenial to his habits, for comforts which he wanted the reliſh to enjoy; and though reſpect for his gude laird and lady checked complaint, the ſmothered diſcontent often made him meet the inquiries of the latter with the ſombrous brow of ſorrow inſtead of the ſunſhine of joy. "Ye meant it," he would ſay, "aw' for "the beeſt, but my ain auld cot was "mair cumfurtable."

"Is virtue then only a name?" the contemplative Geraldine would ſometimes inquire, when ruminating on the untoward

untoward events which often croſſed her benevolent ſchemes. " I have been " taught to conſider the power of be-" ſtowing happineſs as the moſt glo-" rious prerogative which wealth could " enjoy. Have the means by which I " purſued this end been ill ſelected, or " am I particularly unſucceſsful in " chooſing fit ſubjects for my deſign?" The philoſophy of one-and-twenty is not remarkably profound; the views of life are then too highly coloured to admit of the " yellow leaf," which " ſober autumn" gradually introduces; and the error then prevalent even in the beſt-regulated minds is, that the ſcenes in which themſelves are actors furniſh exemptions to received rules as to the maxims by which they are to be governed, or the ſorrows and diſappointments which they are to encounter. Diſpaſſionate experience would have taught

taught lady Monteith, that the very circumſtances of the villagers' complaints argued comparative comfort. Pining poverty, deep affliction, and hopeleſs miſery, would have adopted themes for lamentation widely different from the ſuperior convenience of gaffer Campbell's houſe, the impertinence of dame Brown, the ſuſpicious finery of Margery Bruce, or even the remembrance of ſour-crout and crowdy, which haunted the "auld" Highlander. Her liberal mind would then have added to the certain ſatisfaction of a pure intention the exhilarating enjoyment of that moderate ſucceſs to which all ſublunary ſchemes can alone aſpire; and ſhe would have judged of the happineſs of her colony, as one of our critics has obſerved of the ſorrows of Paſtoral: "That it is a ſufficient re-"commendation of any ſtate, when they "have no greater miſeries to deplore."

A full

A full conviction of that depressing but infallible truth, that all the good of this world must be blended with evil, would also have preserved lady Monteith from the mortifications to which her love of distinction and universal applause likewise exposed her. Against the shafts which, in spite of repeated obligations, low envy and petty detraction sometimes aimed at her character, sweetness of temper and conscious superiority opposed an inadequate defence. Lady Monteith's letters to her dear Lucy have contained a gentle complaint against ingratitude and the hardships of her own lot; for, though anxiously solicitous to oblige and conciliate her neighbours and acquaintance, she often found her well-meant endeavours mistaken, or repaid by dislike and discontent.

If Miss Evans did not always feel the force of her friend's complaints, it must not

not be aſcribed to the diminution of her affection, nor to a want of ſympathy. I have already obſerved, that her mind was of a ſtronger caſt; it was, beſide, more intimately acquainted with real calamity.

CHAP. XX.

When thy laſt breath, ere nature ſunk to reſt,
Thy meek ſubmiſſion to thy God expreſs'd;
When thy laſt look, ere thought and feeling fled,
A mingled gleam of hope and triumph ſhed.

PLEASURES OF MEMORY.

THE reader will remember that I left Mrs. Evans ſtruggling with the violence of a cruel diſeaſe, whoſe reiterated attack ſeemed to leave little hope of the preſervation of her valuable life. She endured her allotted miſeries with exemplary patience, and after her ſufferings had almoſt taught her diſconſolate friends to wiſh for her deliverance, ſhe meekly cloſed a well-ſpent life, bequeathing the invaluable legacy of her virtues to her beloved daughter.

When lady Monteith received the painful tidings, ſhe was in hourly expectation

pectation of her first confinement; and the utter impossibility of taking such a long journey alone prevented her from exerting her personal services to sooth her Lucy's sorrows. She wrote to her in the tenderest strain of affectionate condolence. "My tears," said she, "shall "ever mingle with yours over the sa-"cred remains of my monitress, my "foster-mother, my first and most va-"luable friend! Every good action I "perform, every evil I escape, every "commendable sentiment that rises in "my heart, is owing to her. Her in-"valuable precepts, sanctioned by ex-"perience, now acquire resistless effi-"cacy from the painful reflection that "her lips can repeat them no more. I "brood over them in my memory as a "sacred treasure. Come to me, my "dearest Lucy; my present situation, "which excludes strangers, demands your "tender

" tender foothings, and will fuit the pri-
" vacy of your modeft grief. Come, and
" tell me, while it is frefh in your me-
" mory, all that the dying faint faid, all
" that fhe looked; and arm my fortitude
" for the trials which await me, by repeat-
" ing how fhe endured months of mifery."

" It was the folemn injunction of my
" now bleffed mother," faid Mifs Evans,
in her reply, " that I fhould devote my-
" felf to the pious office of foothing the
" forrows of my poor father, till time,
" uniting with religious refignation,
" fhould foften his griefs, divert his
" thoughts from one painful object, and
" enable him to occupy his leifure hours,
" once fo happily filled, with other
" amufements; and fhe enjoined this
" duty as the nobleft method of proving
" my affectionate regard for her memory.
" She even added, that fhe hoped her
" dif-

" disembodied spirit might be permitted
" to witness my perseverance in a mode
" of conduct, the knowledge of which
" would perfect her beatitude.

" Is this the only way by which I can
" now prove my filial reverence to the
" best of mothers, and shall I shrink
" from the important charge? Even
" your claims upon me, my dearest Ge-
" raldine, are annihilated by this superior
" tie. You will rejoice to hear that I
" am successful. My poor father was
" surprized into an agony of grief last
" Sunday. We attended divine service,
" though he could not attempt to per-
" form the duty. The sight of my
" mother's prayer-book lying upon her
" vacant seat overpowered him. His
" stifled sobs were heard by several of
" the congregation; I knelt by his side,
" I pressed his revered hand to my lips;
" I seemed at that moment to have a
" perfect

" perfect control over my own feelings; " I whispered, that his only remaining " Lucy would endeavour to supply the " place of her whom Providence had " removed to a better world. My fa- " ther viewed me with serene delight, " and, as we walked home, he told me " that I was indeed his comforter, and " worthy of my excellent mother.

" His praise is a cordial to my heart. " While she lived, I thought my con- " duct as a daughter not blamable; but " now that she is beyond the reach of " my attention, I find infinite occasion " for self-reproach. The thought that " we have paid the last offices to a be- " loved object is inconceivably painful. " It turns the mind to a retrospective " view of its past sentiments; and the " remembrance of casual neglects and " inadvertent expressions is torture. If " thou, my mother! couldst arise from " thy

"thy earthy bed, how would thy Lucy "seek to endear thy renewed existence "by redoubled attentions and more "steady virtues! Pardon, thou dear "saint! my imperfect duty; I must "enjoy the thought that thou art pre- "sent, and conscious of those sighs and "tears which I generally conceal from "every other eye.

"Do not think, my dear Geraldine, "that I shall ever forget the particulars "of her dying moments. The awful "remembrance is engraven upon my "mind, and no subsequent events can "obliterate the impression. I will de- "scribe it all to you when we meet; at "that time, I trust, both the hearer and "the relater will be more equal to the "description.

"The express which has just arrived "at the manor-house relieves my heart "from many anxieties. You are in

"safety,

" ſafety, my Geraldine; you were bleſſed
" with a daughter. Your uſeful life is
" ſpared to your huſband, your infant,
" your father, your friends, your country.
" It is a general, a public benefit: but
" let your dejected Lucy lift her grateful
" voice amid the univerſal joy, and
" adore that kind Providence which has
" preſerved her from further depriva-
" tions.

" We ſhall meet, my beloved friend,
" and I truſt ſoon! Sir William has
" juſt left us. He is in raptures at this
" event, though a little inclined to re-
" gret that he has not a grandſon. It
" is all for the beſt, he ſays; he doubts
" not, when he ſees the pretty creature,
" he ſhall be as fond of it as he was of
" his own Geraldine. 'I took it a lit-
" tle hard,' ſaid he, 'that my girl did
" not come to Powerſcourt at the time
" prefixed; but ſhe will now bring the
" dear

" dear infant along with her, and I ſhall " have two pleaſures inſtead of one.'

" Dear excellent man! He has laid a " ſcheme, he ſays, to make us all happy " together. He inſiſts that my father " and I ſhall live with you at the manor-" houſe during the time of your expected " viſit. He ſays, he can divert Mr. " Evans with a hit at backgammon; " and that it will do my ſpirits good to " have a great deal of chat with you. " 'Don't be ſo caſt down, my dear god-" daughter,' he continued, ' we are all " mortal you know; and your good " mother is now much happier than it " was even in your power to make her.'

" I know you love to hear your fa-" ther's words repeated with all their " genuine benevolence and ſimplicity. " He has truly fulfilled the precept of " frequenting the houſe of mourning. " Scarcely a day has paſſed without his

" viſiting

" visiting us, and his kind solicitude has
" been attended with considerable ad-
" vantage. It is scarcely possible to
" converse with him without feeling a
" portion of his tranquil spirit diffused
" into our own bosoms.

" Adieu, dear lady Monteith! How
" I long to see you in your matronly
" character, to fold your little babe in
" my arms, and in the contemplation
" of your deserved felicity to lose for a
" time the recollection of my own irre-
" mediable sorrows!"

Lady Monteith's recovery was rapid, and she was soon able to introduce the young nursery to the eager expectants at Powerscourt. Her lord, though excessively anxious for her safe journey, and doatingly fond of his little moppet, would not accompany them. Business of the greatest importance prevented him; his engagements at fishing parties,

bowling meetings, and cricket matches, were ſo numerous, that it was abſolutely impoſſible to break them. "Take "the greateſt care of yourſelf, therefore, "my dear Geraldine, till I can come "and take care of you. You may de-"pend upon it, that I ſhall ſet off to "ſee your father act 'the old courtier "of the Queen's, the firſt moment I am "diſengaged, for I cannot long be happy "without you. By the bye I think "your father unreaſonable in inſiſting "upon having ſo much of your com-"pany."

I paſs-by ſir William's rapturous reception of his daughter, the unaffected tranſport of the counteſs, and the tears of mingled pain and pleaſure which ſtole ſilently down Lucy's faded cheek. I ſhall not dwell upon the unaffected dignity with which Mr. Evans ſtrove to prevent his ſorrows from caſting a gloom

gloom over the general joy, nor the repeated marks of grateful veneration and affection which lady Monteith paid to the memory of her deceafed friend. We will fuppofe that, holding by her Lucy's arm, fhe vifited the fpot which contained the facred remains of her loft monitrefs; that fhe liftened to the interefting narrative of her ficknefs and death, and, mingling her own tears with thofe of her amiable companion, repeated the remembered precepts of the guardian of her youth, and enjoined upon herfelf the imitation of her virtues. The reader will recollect, that to thefe duties lady Monteith had added an additional bond,—a promife given to the deceafed, "that if her friendfhip could "avail, her Lucy fhould never be un-"happy."

It will alfo be remembered, that Mr. Powerfcourt frequently wrote to his

coufin, and that lord Monteith was invited to overlook the correfpondence. He fincerely wifhed Henry well; he would rather not have his wife make any man miferable; and when he contrafted his own character with the refinement and intelligence vifible in his rival's letters, he felt a little awkward, and inclined to think that her coufin's tafte was more congenial to lady Monteith's than his own. All thefe reafons made him very defirous that Henry fhould break Cupid's fetters; but fince he was confident that he was a very honeft fellow, and that nobody could doubt his wife's propriety, he was anxious to efcape the trouble of reading the correfpondence; for Henry's letters were generally very long, and chiefly about places which he had vifited in his travels; befide, lord Monteith was always terribly incommoded by want of leifure. The countefs was therefore left

left to her own obfervations, which pointed out to her that Henry's increafing vivacity augured well; and, to confirm the fatisfaction which his recovered cheerfulnefs diffufed over her mind, his laft letter expreffed an intention of returning to England by the route of Lower Germany, Switzerland, and Flanders.

It was the encouraging hope which thefe circumftances fupplied, and not the ftimulation of feminine curiofity, that induced lady Monteith to develope her friend's fentiments in a point that had hitherto been guarded by the moft rigid fecrefy. She endeavoured gradually to lead her to the fubject, and began by expatiating on the beauties of Monteith. "My lord," faid fhe, "has "kindly permitted me to indulge a "thoufand little whimfeys in embellifh-"ing a fpot eminently indebted to na-

"ture. I have ſet up temples and al-
"coves out of number. Some are for
"ſolitary muſings, others for ſocial
"parties. There is one, of which I
"hope, Lucy, you will be very fond,
"and that we ſhall ſpend many happy
"hours there, when you come to ſtay
"with us next autumn. It is formed
"upon a plan communicated by Henry
"Powerſcourt; he took it from a beau-
"tiful ruin in Campania. It is open
"to the ſouth, and ſhaded by the
"loftieſt beeches I ever ſaw. The ivy
"and woodbines which I have planted
"round ſome of the columns grow very
"good-humouredly. It has beſides
"the advantage of a proſpect, to which
"even the mountain ſcenery of Powerſ-
"court is flat and unintereſting."

A crimſon bluſh lighted up Miſs Evans's face. "It is," ſaid ſhe, "ex-
"tremely doubtful whether the ſtate of
"my

"my father's spirits will allow me to "spend next autumn with you. But "you mentioned Mr. Powerscourt— "I hope he is well. When did you "hear of him?"

"Very lately," said the countess, drawing out one of his letters. "He "writes in excellent spirits, and he "gives us hopes of his soon returning "to England. I hope, Lucy, you will "meet him at Monteith."

"I meet him?" replied Lucy, in increasing agitation.

"Yes, my love—I am sure you will "have a sincere pleasure in renewing "your acquaintance with an old friend. "In this very letter he expresses a most "lively concern for your loss, and a "strong solicitude for your happiness."

"You were always a little inclined "to fib," replied Lucy, with a smile which revived the idea of her native

ſignificant archneſs. "It is *your* happi-
"neſs for which he feels ſuch ſtrong
"ſolicitude."

"Read then, and be convinced," ſaid the counteſs, tendering her the letter.

"No," ſaid Lucy, recollecting herſelf, and aſſuming a ſerious air; "I ſhall "preſerve the pertinacity aſcribed to "my ſex, and refuſe conviction till you, "dear tempter, tell me, what good "would ariſe from my indulging a vain "hope, that I excite an intereſt in Mr. "Powerſcourt's heart. You know my "ſecret, Geraldine; and let me for ever "ſilence your obſervations on this ſub-"ject, by owning that I know his. If "I have not your charms to attract his "affection, I have at leaſt fortitude to "avoid his contempt. His regret at "loſing the woman of his choice ſhall "not be aggravated by compaſſion for

"a love-

" a love-lorn girl, who, betrayed by
" inexperience to unſolicited love, pur-
" ſues him with the offer of an unac-
" cepted heart."

" I admire your lovely pride," ſaid the counteſs. " Yet my friend's deli-
" cacy need not be hurt when I declare,
" that, as nothing but a pre-attachment
" would have made me inſenſible to
" Henry's merits, it is my moſt earneſt
" wiſh that ſhe may reward them."

" How reward them, lady Monteith?
" Can a forced alliance (and pity is com-
" pulſion to a noble mind) reward the
" generous, firm, ſelf-denying virtues
" of Harry Powerſcourt? Shall the
" man who could renounce a bleſſing
" his whole ſoul was ardent to poſſeſs,
" even when by that renunciation he
" expoſed himſelf to the anger of the
" friend he beſt loved, be linked to a
" woman who found the ties of delicacy

" too weak to reſtrain her ſelfiſh pre-
" ference?"

" Can a lively ſenſibility of ſuperior " goodneſs efface the delicacy of your " character? No, my Lucy, it gives to " it a more intereſting attraction. Yet " I perfectly agree with you, that it " ought to be kept ſecret from the ob- " ject of your regard; for, till Henry is " juſt to your merits, even he is un- " worthy of you."

" And is he not, in your ſenſe of " the word, unjuſt?"

" I own that his heart was beſtowed " where its value was leſs eſteemed; " but ſince that attachment is now ut- " terly at an end——"

" Go on, my ſweet flatterer, and ſay " in plain terms, 'Now that I am mar- " ried, do you, Lucy, come and meet " the agreeable batchelor at Monteith: " throw

"throw yourſelf in his way, ſtudy his "humours, and try to perſuade him to "take a little notice of you.—No, "Geraldine; the man who has loved "you will not eaſily be caught by other "lures; and, dearly as I regard you, I "ſhall be too tenacious of my own "right of pre-eminence to admit of your "participation of my huſband's heart."

"His return to England," replied the counteſs, "is a clear proof that "he can view me with indifference. "Muſt the man who has been un-"fortunate in his firſt choice neceſ-"ſarily remain for ever after inſenſi-"ble to female merit? Surely, Lucy, "that romantic idea was never incul-"cated by your mother's precepts."

"Such a change is not abſolutely "impoſſible; but highly improbable "in the preſent inſtance. Obſerve the "line of conduct which I mean ſteadily

" to purſue; and I conjure you by our " friendſhip, and your wiſhes for my " happineſs, do not attempt to make " me deviate from it. I ſhall in the " firſt place perſiſt in my endeavours to " conquer a preference which promiſes " to be always irreconcilable with my " peace; and, as a means to forward this " deſirable end, neither in your letters " nor your converſation do you, my " Geraldine, introduce the painful theme. " I will neither avoid nor ſeek Mr. " Powerſcourt; I will neither appear " anxious to pleaſe, nor fearful to offend " him. Whatever progreſs I make in " his affections ſhall be all in my own " natural character. Do you exert your " penetration, and warn me when I de- " part from this line of conduct. Be " as jealous of my delicacy as you " would of your own; and if ever my " countenance betray in his preſence

" the perturbation of my mind, warn " me of the danger of exciting my own " future remorfe; and let me haften " back to hide my folly in this folitude, " where my mind fhall foon regain its " loft energy by the contemplation of " my mother's virtues."

She then prefented lady Monteith with a copy of verfes. " Read," faid fhe, " this little tribute to filial duty, " which burft from my heart during my " lonely walk laft night. It is not finifh- " ed, but it will convince you that I am " capable of more worthy feelings than " the weak regrets of unrequited love." So faying, fhe fuddenly left the countefs, who with mingled admiration and regret perufed the following fragment:

Still will I wander through thefe mofs-grown
bowers,
And fcent the grateful fragrance of thefe flowers;
Still

Still will I pace the paths her footsteps press'd,
Still watch the favour'd plants her culture bless'd;
While the loud throstle warbling fills the grove,
Mix'd with the murmurs of the melting dove.
Here, when the sun's declining car allows
A deeper shade to hover o'er the boughs,
Sweet Philomel, who shunn'd the "garish day,"
Awakes th' enamour'd echoes with her lay;
O Bird! best darling of the house, again
Pour on my pensive ear that thrilling strain;
Again repeat it!—Fancy shall prolong
Thy notes, and give expression to thy song;
Tell what deep swells describe parental woe,
For sever'd love what softer descants flow;
Sing on—the tender sympathy I feel,
For, as around me night's dun shadows steal,
Keen retrospection every sense employs,
And gives a substance to departed joys.
I see thy form, my honour'd mother! glide
Wrapt in a filmy mist, and scarce descried;
I turn delighted, and again rejoice
In the known cadence of thy silver voice.
O! ever-lov'd, rever'd, lamented, say,
From what far region hast thou wing'd thy way?
Charg'd with what kind injunction art thou come
To turn my footsteps from the path-worn tomb?

Appear'st

Appear'ſt thou in diſpleaſure, to upbraid
Some broken promiſe, or ſome rite unpaid;
Or haſt thou journey'd to this dark terrene
To tell the ſecrets of the world unſeen?—
'Tis ſilence all—Light zephyrs wave the trees,—
'Twas but the glancing boughs, and riſing breeze;
The faint impreſſion fades upon my brain,
The viſion cloſes, but my griefs remain!

CHAP. XXI.

Still to ourfelves in every place confign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find:
With fecret courfe, while no loud ftorms annoy,
Glides the fmooth current of domeftic joy.
GOLDSMITH.

AMONG the various means employed by Providence to foften human calamity, none are more eminently beneficial than the opiates which time adminifters to grief. It was finely obferved by a novelift (not one of the prefent fchool), that none but the guilty are long and completely miferable. In vain does the foul, while labouring under the ftrong paroxyfms of calamity or dif appointment, renounce all acquaintance with terreftrial pleafures, and, like the Hebrew patriarch, refolve to "go down to

to the grave mourning." Time will soften the poignancy of regret; a Benjamin may arise to divert affection from the grave of Joseph, and the tears of anguish may be converted to those of joy. This supposition, however, premises that the grief did not originate in the depravity of the sufferer. Intervening years may render vice callous or penitent; but the impenetrability of one state, and the apprehensiveness of the other, are alike irreconcilable with the idea of happiness. It has been long acknowledged, that, though the loss of a beloved friend seems at first the most insupportable of all calamities, even affectionate minds sooner acquiesce in such deprivations, than they do in many other kinds of distress. This may sometimes be accounted for upon religious principles; but even when it does not own such exalted motives, it seems

seems severe to ascribe it to levity of disposition. Existing in the midst of a dying world, we should rather employ our faculties in extracting improvement from scenes of mortality, than waste them in unavailing regret. The bond of friendship is not, indeed, dissolved by death; yet it does not impose incessant woe on the survivor, who must soon journey through the same dark valley which the lamented object has just explored.

Strengthened by such considerations, still further enforced by the precepts and example of her father, Miss Evans's grief gradually subsided into the tranquil cheerfulness which naturally belonged to her character. Her affection for her mother showed itself in a tender attachment to her memory, and to every subject connected with it; in a steady imitation of her virtues, and a faithful ob-

servance

ſervance of her precepts. The high heroic tone of her mind would have been wounded by a ſuppoſition, that love was more invulnerable than filial grief; and ſhe certainly ſo far ſubdued her early preference, as to render it very little troubleſome either to herſelf or her friends. It did not incapacitate her for any duties, nor did it abſorb any of her agreeable properties. She viſited Monteith in a few months after her mother's death, and delighted all who ſaw her with her good ſenſe and agreeable vivacity. She even met Mr. Powerſcourt without betraying her ſecret emotion to the moſt ſcrutinizing eye. She received him without either diſcovering ſtrong tranſport or adopting an artificial reſerve; and ſhe bade him adieu with a voice ſo little tremulous, that even lady Monteith could ſcarcely detect her latent emotion.

It

It may be for the advantage of all love-fick young ladies, who fit under woodbine bowers or fhady beeches, or who walk by moonlight to hear nightingales and waterfalls, to learn by what means Mifs Evans was enabled to make fo refpectable a defence againft the purblind archer. In the firft place, fhe was conftantly employed; in the fecond, fhe never indulged in the dangerous pleafure of dwelling on the name and merits of her beloved, either in her converfation or in her letters, nor did fhe ever allow herfelf to complain of her hard lot. To prevent fuch repinings, fhe often vifited the abodes of real mifery, and her attention was directed to that courfe of ftudy which is the reverfe of fentimental refinement.

Mr. Powerfcourt's fhort refidence at Monteith did not indicate a revival of that ftrong attachment to his lovely coufin

coufin which had given him fo much unhappinefs. He had found abfence a grand fpecific. Change of fcene, and interefting objects of purfuit, had counteracted the effect of love upon a mind, which, though naturally calm and contemplative, was remarkably fufceptible of deep impreffions, and addicted to a penfive caft of thought. He had derived ftill further advantages from his travels. His capacious underftanding was eminently difpofed to receive all the improvement which an extenfive view of men and things could afford. Habits of fociety wore off his natural referve; and, as his youthful awkwardnefs was owing to uncommon diffidence, the fame circumftances which infpired a modeft confcioufnefs in his own powers, gave grace to his perfon and elegance to his addrefs. Thus improved, Mifs Evans might have found her determined

mined ſtoiciſm an ineffectual defence, if it had been long expoſed to ſo powerful an aſſailant. It may, on the other hand, be aſked, if Miſs Evans's merit was not equally calculated to convince Henry, that female attractions may faſcinate in more than one form. I readily aſſent to the ſuggeſtion; but the preſence of lady Monteith did not admit the fair diſplay of Lucy's powers; and that young lady contributed to her own defeat, by continually ſuſpecting that her friend led the diſcourſe to ſuch a topic purpoſely to call her out, and that ſuch or ſuch an amuſement was projected with a deſign to leave her tête-à-tête with Mr. Powerſcourt. Her indignation at theſe ideas was ſo warm, that inſtead of being peculiarly brilliant, her determination to avoid being ſingular could not prevent her from being uncommonly reſerved.

Henry,

Henry, on the other hand, confcious of the fragility of new-formed refolutions, was prevented from attending to the attractions of Mifs Evans by a fcrupulous watchfulnefs over his own heart, left it fhould deviate from thofe limits which he had prefcribed, in order to prevent lady Monteith from occupying more of his thoughts than common admiration juftified. He found, upon this vifit, that her wit and beauty were her leaft attractions. As a wife, as a mother, how admirable!—how enchanting as the prefiding directrefs of a large family!—how intelligent in her pleafures!—how prudent in her benevolence! Lord Monteith was uncommonly attentive to him, and fhewed a ftrong defire to contract a friendly intimacy. He talked of the pleafures of the chace, of the agreeable fociety of many gay carelefs fouls with whom he fpent feveral happy

happy hours. Good heavens! could the husband of Geraldine relish such low amusements, and be worthy of her? This thought kept Henry awake one whole night, and the next morning he determined to set off on a tour to the Hebrides. Lord Monteith earnestly pressed him to take his castle in his return, and tempted him by offering to introduce him to a party who proposed spending a month in hunting the red deer among the Grampian hills. Mr. Powerscourt determined to avoid every opportunity of drawing comparisons dangerous to his integrity, and proposed going to Ireland in his way back, with an intention of paying a long-intended visit to a particular friend.

The attachment of the Monteiths to their northern residence seemed to increase. My lord was sometimes reluctantly forced by the unavoidable

pressure

preſſure of parliamentary buſineſs to viſit London, and the counteſs generally embraced that opportunity of paying her duty at Powerſcourt. She once accompanied her lord to London, where lady Arabella, who was ſtill aſpiring to the character of a firſt-rate toaſt, was terrified at the appearance of rivalry with which the undiminiſhed charms of her lovely ſiſter threatened her, even in her own domain. Probably this viſit would have proved fatal to all the fond terms of affection which lady Arabella's letters had conſtantly expreſſed, had not family harmony been preſerved by the alarming illneſs of lady Monteith's eldeſt daughter who was left in Scotland, which ſummoned the affrighted mother from the haunts of pleaſure to the bed of pain. The child ſoon recovered under her watchful eye, and, though not inſenſible to the blandiſhments of adulation and

the ſeductions of pleaſure, the grateful heart of Geraldine forgot the diſappointment of loſing the promiſed amuſement in the tranſporting idea of the reſtoration of her darling.

She was by this time the mother of three daughters, all promiſing and lovely. The repeated diſappointment of having male iſſue ſomewhat diſconcerted her lord, yet the chagrin was not ſo predominant as to cauſe any diminution in his attachment to his lady. Experience taught him that her unvaried ſweetneſs was neceſſary to his happineſs; and it never occurred to him that his peculiar pleaſures and purſuits were any impediments to her's. With too little reflection ever to attend to his own defects, and too little judgment to appreciate Geraldine's refined excellence, he gave an unqualified aſſent to the aſſertions of his acquaintance, and believed himſelf not

only

only a very happy, but alſo a very excellent huſband: and who among the lords of the creation will controvert that opinion, when they hear that his lady never contradicted him, and never found fault?

I ſhall leave to the ſentimental part of my readers the taſk of commenting on the ſelfiſhneſs and inelegance of lord Monteith's character; for, doubtleſs, they have long ago obſerved, that his mind was caſt in too groſs a mould to form the proper counterpart of Geraldine's; and I am ready to allow, that the diſſimilarity muſt be fatal to that pure felicity, the reſult of a perfect congeniality in taſte and ſentiment, which is always the reward of heroes and heroines, and is ſometimes realized on the ſtage of life. Such marked diſproportion affords an unanſwerable argument to diſſuade a young lady of ſtrong feeling

from accepting an otherwife unexceptionable offer; but fince no law, either human or divine, permits it to diffolve the marriage bond, it cannot be urged as an excufe for married wretchednefs, unlefs fome moral defect or painful peculiarity in temper be fuperadded. Senfibility may wifh that the ftock of mutual happinefs may receive every agreeable addition; but judgment will look abroad, and, eftimating its own real fituation by adverting to the lot of others, will find reafons for content, particularly if humility whifper fomewhat of its own confcious deficiencies. I fpeak of general wretchednefs, not of a momentary pang; of a confirmed train of thinking, not of a fudden reflection which reafon examines and rejects.

Long before the period of which I am now treating, lady Monteith had abandoned the impracticable fcheme of arraying

arraying Actæon in the veſtments of Apollo. The diſcovery was painful to her vanity, which had taught her credulity to believe, that love and beauty are the true alchymiſts that can tranſmute the baſeſt metals into the pureſt gold. But the ſanguine hopes of youth do not ſink under one diſappointment. Her lord poſſeſſed many good qualities, and the uncontrolled power which he gave her over his fortune allowed her to execute every ſcheme that her liberality ſuggeſted, and purſue her own taſte in its fulleſt extent, provided ſhe ſpared him the irkſome taſk of being obliged to pay attention to her plans. As to any idea of being impeded in the execution of his own, the yielding gentleneſs of lady Monteith preſerved her from making the mad attempt, which could only have been compared to "drinking up Eiſel, or eating a crocodile."

If the suggestions of latent pride, or, to call it by its softer name, conscious superiority, sometimes led her to think that she might have made a more congenial choice, returning tenderness bade her start from the injurious suggestion, and fly to her colony or her plantations, which, presenting the idea of her lord's indulgence, never failed to inspire complacency. The future was an ample field for hope, and she filled it with the most agreeable images. She determined, by strictly attending to the education of her daughters, to bend their ductile minds to such pursuits as would enable her to find those colloquial pleasures in her maternal character, which had been withheld from her connubial portion.

Her thoughts were sometimes diverted from her favourite employment of framing such a plan of education as should

ſhould inſure ſucceſs, to the contemplation of her Lucy's approaching happineſs, which every day rendered more probable. Henry now generally reſided at Powerſcourt. His filial attentions and agreeable manners enlivened ſir William's declining years; and his frequent opportunities of obſerving Miſs Evans convinced the counteſs that her beloved friend would gradually make the conqueſt ſo important to her repoſe, in the manner which her ſtrict ſenſe of delicacy and propriety required.

Bending under the enfeebling load of time, but ſtill tranquil, ſocial, and benevolent, the viſits of his beloved daughter ſeemed to renew ſir William Powerſcourt's frail exiſtence. Her countenance always beſpoke happineſs, and he forgave the negligent inadvertencies viſible in lord Monteith's behaviour to himſelf. "Old men and young lords,"

 ſaid

faid he, "can't be expected to fuit one "another; but he is kind to my child, "and that is fufficient."

I have now defcribed thofe fcenes of lady Monteith's life, in which, judging by the proper eftimate of terreftrial good, fhe might be termed innocent and happy. An artful feducer combining with her mafter-paffion reverfed the pleafing profpects, and produced fcenes which the following pages will develope. While I profecute my arduous, and perhaps unpopular tafk, I rely on the lenity of thofe who fincerely regret the alarming relaxation of principle that too furely difcriminates a declining age; and I anticipate the candid allowances which they will make for any incidental defects in a well-meant endeavour to point out the tendency of feveral opinions now too generally diffufed through every rank in fociety.

CHAP. XXII.

When Florio ſpeaks, what virgin could withſtand,
If gentle Damon did not ſqueeze her hand?
With varying vanities, from every part,
They ſhift the moving toyſhop of their heart;
Where wigs with wigs, with ſwordknots ſwordknots ſtrive,
Beaus baniſh beaus, and coaches coaches drive.

POPE.

WHILE lady Monteith exerted all the powers of her mind to enjoy fame and to diffuſe happineſs, and her beloved Lucy Evans purſued the humbler but ſurer path of conſcientiouſly endeavouring to diſcharge her duty to God and man, lady Arabella Macdonald, already embarked on the ſea of gaiety and diſſipation, applied all her thoughts to the attainment of two doubtful bleſſings, a huſband and a coronet.

Diſintereſted love is always a very favourite topic with youth and beauty.

After a ſly obſervation, that pretty litt'e Geraldine might owe ſome attracti ons to Powerſcourt manor, ſhe entreated that her aunt would cautiouſly ſuppreſs the communication of her intended liberality; and, by hinting that jointures always reverted to the family from which they were granted, leave her to depend upon her own radiant eyes for procuring a ſplendid eſtabliſhment. Oroondates himſelf muſt feel ſome increaſe of rapture, if, while his bride curteſied to him after the performance of the marriage ceremony, ſhe at the ſame time whiſpered to him, that ſhe was the acknowledged heireſs of four thouſand a year. But if lady Arabella's huſband had any ſpark of Oroondates' gallantry, his rapture would ſolely reſult from the delicate reſerve of the lady, and he would undoubtedly reply, "Wealth cannot add "to the tranſport I feel in calling you

 "mine.

"mine. Employ the gaudy toys you "mention in whatever way you pleafe; "they will be no otherwife welcome to "me, than as they promote your fatif-"faction; for your heart is the only "treafure which I wifh to retain."

In ages of very remote antiquity lovers might talk in this ftyle; but as all authentic memorials of thefe periods are unhappily loft, fceptics are inclined to doubt the actual exiftence of fuch very difinterefted heroifm. Poor lady Arabella found that the fwains who flourifhed in the clofe of the eighteenth century were of a very different order of beings. Perceiving that the firft London winter produced more ftarers than adorers, fhe fet out for Bath. Here Cupid in vain continued to fhoot his arrows from her eyes; the apathy of diffipation, more invulnerable than the fhield of Minerva, defended the intended victims. Idle-

nefs is faid to be the mother of Love; but not the idlenefs of public places. The lounging beaus, as they fauntered arm in arm along the rooms, occafionally cheered her fpirits with a paffing "How "d'ye do," and then joined in protefting, "that fhe was an immenfe fine girl, and "that it was a fhame her father had not "left her a fortune." The converfation generally concluded with a laugh at the repulfive ftate of lady Madelina, which nobody feemed willing to infringe.

Lady Arabella now determined to try the effect of rural fcenes; and, having chofen the then fafhionable retirement of Brighton as the probable refidence of the vagrant loves, fhe perfuaded lady Madelina, who went to Bath to fix a flying gout, that her complaint was certainly fcorbutic, for which fea-bathing was the only fpecific; and there at laft the expected lover appeared in the form of

of Sir Phelim O'Connaught, a very perſonable and very aſſiduous Iriſh gentleman of good family, and unqueſtionable honour. Though lady Arabella had proteſted that ſhe never would ſurrender to any thing beneath a coronet, Sir Phelim's addreſſes were ſo perfectly rhapſodical, that her heart ſeemed to flutter, when at this critical period its tranquillity was re-eſtabliſhed by the appearance of ſome very ungenteel company,— I mean, a couple of ſheriff's officers. Sir Phelim was ſo ſhocked at the audacity of ſuch low villains intruding upon the haunts of gentlemen, that he was never ſeen abroad after their arrival. It afterwards appeared, that his attachment was not ſo perfectly diſintereſted as had been ſuppoſed; for that he had acquired ſome knowledge of the diſpoſal of lady Madelina's jointure.

Lady

Lady Arabella joined in the laugh againſt her quondam adorer, and declared, that though certainly he was very ſpecious, ſhe had found him out in an inſtant, and was determined to divert herſelf with the fellow's ridiculous ways. She alſo added, that this was another proof how prudent it was in ladies of fortune to *conceal* their expectations, for *avowed* wealth was always expoſed to degrading ſolicitations.

The winter campaign opened with eclat. A noble earl, whoſe affairs were a little deranged, laid ſiege in form, and the conteſt ſeemed to predict a happy iſſue, had not lady Madelina put the young general prematurely to the rout by inquiring after his rent-roll. Poor Arabella felt a little piqued; but no matter; —theſe were her happieſt days;—ſhe loved liberty, deteſted reſtraint, and

danced,

danced, laughed, and viſited more than ever.

The defection of the noble earl was repaired by the attendance of two admirers, a viſcount and a private gentleman, who ſtarted in the career of honourable love at the ſame inſtant. Hitherto her ladyſhip had been rather unfortunate in the character of her adorers; but her indeciſion in the preſent inſtance proved that ſhe was actuated by motives widely different from the deſire of connubial happineſs. Lord Fitzoſborne was an emaciated victim to licentious purſuits; Mr. Stanley was a youth of great promiſe, educated under the auſpices of a worthy father. The aim of the former was to repair his ſhattered fortune, and to gratify his ſelfiſh vanity by exhibiting to the world a fine young woman in the character of his wife. The latter ſought domeſtic tranquillity: the

beauty of lady Arabella had caught his eye; her reported expectations far exceeded what his father would require in pecuniary affairs; and, supposing that a young woman must imbibe every virtue under the auspices of a person of lady Madelina's strict decorum, he called her levity innocent gaiety, her affectation sprightliness of manner; and, sincerely worshipping the image he had set up, he ardently solicited his charmer's heart. Though my discoveries have enabled my sagacious readers to conclude, that the unfortunate Stanley was in pursuit of a nonentity, an impassioned lover could not perceive that nothing but the adverse weight of a coronet prevented the nodding scale from preponderating in his favour. True to the first object of her youthful desires, even the unworthiness of the giver could not in her idea invalidate the gift. But the progress of

my

my hiſtory now calls me from the portraiture of faſhionable love to the definition of polite friendſhip.

Though lady Arabella had very little of the ſentimental in her character, ſhe enjoyed the bleſſing of a boſom friend. Her acquaintance with Miſs Campley commenced at her firſt arrival in London. They dreſſed in the ſame uniform, went to the ſame parties, laughed at the ſame quizzes, and flirted with the ſame beaus. But Miſs Campley, being the uncontrolled miſtreſs of her own actions, ſoared to a character which ſome reſtrictions of lady Madelina's prevented her niece from adopting; I mean, that of a daſher. She drove four in hand, laid wagers, ran in debt, played at Pharo, and, though infinitely inferior to her friend in beauty, certainly laid claim to greater taſte and ſpirit.

As

As the ladies had never interfered in each other's conquests, their friendship was fixed as adamant. To own the truth, conquest and Harriet Campley were no longer synonimous terms. The gentlemen had long been more desirous of winning her money than her heart; and even few knight-errants would have possessed sufficient courage and disinterested generosity, to rescue a distressed damsel from the harpy talons of the law at the risk of their own certain ruin.

As the prospect of a splendid establishment became less probable, Miss Campley's creditors were more clamorous; and, though she professed herself highly delighted with the expected eclat of an execution, her haggard countenance betrayed an agonized mind. The period of lady Arabella's double triumph proved the crisis of her fate; and the

unexpected

unexpected death of an only brother changed her profpects from the gloom of a prifon to pleafure and affluence.

Lord Fitzofborne had known Mifs Campley from her earlieft youth; he had often been at her parties, and had won her money without wifhing for a further connexion; but fhe now ftruck him in a much more interefting point of view. I do not mean to infinuate, that he thought her mourning was particularly becoming, and fuited to her complexion; his lordfhip's tafte led him to purfue more folid advantages than a fet of features can promife. He was an excellent calculator; and, though he too well underftood the character of his prefent miftrefs, to fear the ultimate fuccefs of his rival, he laid fo much ftrefs upon the attractions of old dowagers, and the frailty of vows of widowhood, that he confidered three thoufand a-year in immediate

mediate poſſeſſion as better than four thouſand in reverſion. But while he continued rather unreſolved, the gout fixed in lady Madelina's foot, and her phyſician congratulated her upon an event which would infallibly add at leaſt twenty years to her life. His lordſhip waited for no other inducement to pay his devoirs at the ſhrine of the other divinity. Miſs Campley's yielding gentleneſs forgave paſt ſlights; and in leſs than a month lady Arabella received bride-cake and favours from the viſcounteſs Fitzoſborne.

This certainly was provoking; but the faithful Stanley was a ſure reſource. Here again lady Arabella's evil genius met her to blaſt her projects. Mr. Stanley was not quite ſo much in love as to loſe all his powers of obſervation. His charmer's conduct had been at leaſt doubtful. The encouraging ſmiles which had

had beamed full upon him ever ſince the viſcount's dereliction, were too ſuſpicious to be completely faſcinating; and he thought a journey into the country would at leaſt ſhow his miſtreſs, that he was not one of Cupid's tame votaries. In his take-leave viſit he made ſome further diſcoveries into her ladyſhip's character; and while he made his final bow, his regret at his diſappointment was ſoftened by the conſciouſneſs of eſcaping that worſt of evils, a diſſipated unprincipled wife.

Lady Arabella had charming ſpirits. She laughed at the vanity of the men, creatures who ſuppoſed themſelves of conſequence; and, intimating that though ſhe had private reaſons for rejecting Lord Fitzoſborne, they were not of a nature to influence her dearest Harriet's choice, ſhe waited with impatience for the return of the bride and bridegroom

bridegroom to town. She flew to make the wedding viſit, gave in her card, was admitted, and congratulated the happy pair in terms equally ſincere with the profeſſions of eſteem and friendſhip which ſhe received in return. The viſcounteſs now inſiſted that ſhe ſhould be her conſtant viſitor, and ſtrongly urged her not to mope herſelf at home during her aunt's confinement. Lady Arabella declared, that her ladyſhip was the only good Chriſtian that ſhe had talked to for a long time; and that it really would be charity to take her out of the ſphere of flannels and fomentations. They agreed to go to every place where there was any thing to be ſeen. Lady Fitzoſborne declared with a ſmile, that even if her lord were ſometimes of the party ſhe had a ſoul too capacious for jealouſy; and her equally liberal friend, with a loud laugh, obſerved, that ſhe was not

yet

yet arrived at the age of envy and her laſt prayers. Lady Fitzoſborne's ſpeech needs no explanation; but the wit of lady Arabella's retort conſiſted in an alluſion to the circumſtance of her dear friend's being ten years older than herſelf.

The friends were conſtantly together, except when the myſteries of Pharo impoſed a temporary ſeparation. I have already ſaid, that lady Madelina's ſevere notions reſtricted ſome of her niece's propenſities; but this was not the only thing that prevented Arabella from being caught in that ruinous vortex from whoſe fatal contact peace and honour muſt never hope to eſcape. Lord Fitzoſborne was, ſince his marriage, become a man of character, a lover of decorum, and a conſiderable obſerver of pecuniary advantages. Fortune ſeldom beſtows her gifts ſingly, and,

and, ſince her acceſſion to her brother's eſtate, his lady had an amazing run of luck. She was not only able to diſcharge her own debts of honour, but to pay ſome of his; and this was the only circumſtance which could at all reconcile his notions of propriety with her infraction of the laws of her country. His thoughts were now turned to the advantageous eſtabliſhment of his brother Edward Fitzoſborne, who had reſided many years abroad upon the limited portion of a younger ſon. His lordſhip had been aſſured by many reſpectable travellers, that this young gentleman was an honour to his name, poſſeſſed of elegant manners, uncommon erudition, and an irreproachable character: that he appeared in the firſt circles, correſponded with the firſt literary characters of the age, and was fitted to move in the moſt exalted ſphere.

The

The noble viſcount's fraternal tenderneſs yearned at the recital. He determined to ſend for him to England, to get him into parliament, to puſh him in the world, and to marry him to a fortune. It was with a reference to this deſign that he prohibited the viſcounteſs from initiating her friend in her private myſteries.

Mr. Fitzoſborne received his brother's ſummons to England with regret, and begged that he might be permitted to remain at Paris, where he was juſt then contemplating the ſublime ſpectacle of a great nation emancipating itſelf from the fetters of tyranny and ſuperſtition. It was, he ſaid, his wiſh to continue abroad, to watch the progreſs of events that would enlarge his mind, and render him ſtill worthier of the office of a Britiſh legiſlator. The peer, whoſe ideas were equally liberal,

 granted

granted the requeſt; and, depending upon his own watchfulneſs, and the chicanery of his lady, to prevent the glittering gold-fiſh that he wiſhed to entrap from eſcaping their net, he permitted Mr. Fitzoſborne to proſecute his ſtudies, till the coercive meaſures which democracy was compelled to adopt obliged even the lovers of freedom to take ſhelter in the legal deſpotiſm of Old England.

CHAP. XXIII.

——'Tis not impoſſible
But one, the wicked'ſt caitiff on the ground,
May ſeem as ſhy, as grave, as juſt, as abſolute,
As Angelo; even ſo may Angelo
In all his dreſſings, characts, titles, forms,
Be an arch villain.

SHAKESPEARE.

LADY ARABELLA was with her dear Harriet when Mr. Fitzoſborne unexpectedly arrived. He had narrowly eſcaped the guillotine, had paſſed the ſea in a fiſhing-boat, and had encountered ſo many perils, that his admiration of that meretricious liberty whoſe diſtinguiſhing code is equality of wretchedneſs, was rather abated. "Hair-breadth 'ſcapes" are very intereſting to moſt ladies, and Mr. Fitzoſborne's powers of recitation were unrivalled. His per-

ſon had every charm, his manner every advantage. Lady Arabella looked, liſtened, admired, and went home vaſtly rejoiced, that ſuch a delightful young man had eſcaped the odious democrats.

The next morning, at an early hour, lady Fitzoſborne ruſhed into her friend's dreſſing-room. "Enchanting news! "my deareſt Bella," ſaid ſhe; "we "ſhall never more be diſtreſſed for "want of a ciciſbeo. My lord has "aſked Edward to live with us till he "forms an eſtabliſhment of his own. "Is not he a divine fellow? And this "morning he looks more reſiſtleſs than "ever. Such ſpirit! ſuch information! "It would have been a ſhame to have "had him confounded with a parcel of "emigrant deſperadoes. He ſpoke "very fine things of you, my dear; he "ſeems quite ſtruck, I aſſure you. If "you were but a little more Greek in "your drapery, he declared, you would "have

" have put him in mind of La Liberté
" on the day of deification, who was
" the handſomeſt courteſan in all
" Paris.

" But, bleſs me!" continued the
Britiſh peereſs, looking at her watch,
" how I trifle. I vow I have fifty
" viſits to make this morning. Good
" bye! I ſhall call upon you for the
" opera this evening. I long to ſhow
" Edward the new houſe. O, I declare
" I have not had the humanity to in-
" quire after *aunty*; but I can't ſtay to
" hear now. You'll tell me to-night all
" the proceſs of the foot, and the doctor.
" Sparkle, my love: Edward is amaz-
" ingly fond of wit."

Pity is ſaid to be near akin to Love:
and when blended with admiration, and
inſpired by the idea of awakening reci-
procal ſentiments in the boſom of an-
other, it may certainly be ſtyled the

parent of the ſoft infatuation. Though philoſophy was Mr. Fitzoſborne's chief forte, he did not belong to the ſchool of Diogenes. One prime article in his creed was, that an adept did not ſtudy to leſs advantage for poſſeſſing the good things of this life. Indeed, as his views were not very clear on the ſubject of a future ſtate, he conſidered it to be his bounden duty to embrace all the advantages which the preſent afforded. Gentlemen of his principles do not mean by their general declamations in favour of liberality, honour, and philoſophical equanimity, to convey the preciſe idea, that ſuch qualities are indiſpenſably requiſite in their own characters: for they know, that the exterior reſemblance exactly anſwers the ſame end. Superficial obſervers (and the major part of mankind belong to this claſs) will give you credit for poſ-

ſeſſing

feffing a virtue, provided you are loud in your cenfures of an oppofite vice. Good notions of public liberty give the licence which permits you to be a private tyrant. The daring atheift and fophifticating fceptic may alike fhelter under the veil of religious moderation: and provided the words honour, fentiment, and philanthropy be upon your tongue, you may difturb the repofe of mankind, either individually or collectively, with impunity.

To illuftrate the analogy in the prefent inftance: Could the enlarged foul of Edward Fitzofborne have heard the fhameful tale of mercenary indigence concealing difguft under the mafk of admiration to entrap the wealth of inanity into a degrading connexion, without expreffing the moft generous emotion? How would his ftrong feelings have revolted at the fight of thofe fordid

ſhackles which militated againſt the natural liberty of man, and the idea of that *confirmed habit* of diſſimulation which annihilated his ſuppoſed inherent perfection. He could certainly have been very eloquent upon theſe themes, if they referred to the conduct of a methodiſt or a formaliſt; but when applied to his own concerns it was ſoon adjuſted. The girl wanted a huſband, the gentleman a fortune; the balance, therefore, was as nicely trimmed as the moſt equalizing ſpirit could deſire. This conſideration might have been further uſeful, as it neceſſarily diſſolved all ties of gratitude; but Mr. Fitz-oſborne had long before diſcovered, that private gratitude is inconſiſtent with public virtue.

Lady Arabella had no doubt that her wit and beauty held out ſufficient attractions to a gentleman ſo profeſſedly

diſ-

disinterested as her new admirer (for he assumed that character in a few days); and she did not even attempt to misconstrue his behaviour, or to disguise the pleasure which she received from his addresses. Fitzosborne was not a sensualist. Beauty was to him a mere abstract quality, particularly when associated to the idea of a wife. He had been too long accustomed to the coruscations of real genius, to bestow more than a languid smile on lady Arabella's jejune *bons mots*. Even that languid smile was soon converted into saturnine silence. Her character was too superficial even to interest his attention. He discovered her foibles, detected her artifices, and despised her understanding, in the first month of his courtship. She was too easy a conquest for his ambition; and nothing but the reluctance which he felt at the thought of being de-

 pendent

pendent upon his brother could have reconciled him to the idea of an alliance.

Perceiving her heart irredeemably enthralled, (though in this opinion he was ſomewhat duped by his own vanity,) he began to act the preconcerted part. He was now no longer the aſſiduous lover, but the man of firm honour and inviolable integrity, incapable of betraying unſuſpicious innocence, or of ſeducing a young lady from the duty which ſhe owed to the protecting kindneſs of a venerable relation. Lady Arabella unwarily acknowledged, that her aunt was inclined to ſuſpect a mercenary motive for his addreſſes, and this drew from him an exordium on the purity and diſintereſtedneſs of his attachment, with a declaration, that though it would glow in his breaſt with unabated fervour, yet he had rather periſh the untimely victim

of

of despair, than justify Lady Madelina's sentiments by a departure from that strict honour which had ever been the ruling principle of his life. "No! "lady Arabella," continued he, while the astonished lady was incapable of interrupting him, "the enlightened mind "needs no other incentive than conscious "rectitude to enable it always to act as "it ought. I can support penury, exile, "or even the loss of you; but I cannot "support disgrace. Lady Madelina has "injured me by her unjust suspicions. "She has cruelly striven to infuse her "own narrow prejudices into a mind "which I hoped was incapable of an "illiberal doubt. How can I be sure "that she has not succeeded? Your "eyes, your manner, evince less confi-"dence than they were wont; and my "alarmed heart anticipates the gloomy "period, when reserve and suspicion

 "shall

"ſhall chill the ſentiments of pure, in-
"genuous, diſintereſted love. Sooner
"than ſuch miſchiefs ſhall fall upon me,
"I will reſign you, madam, and even
"at this moment tear myſelf from you
"for ever."

"I cannot ſee for what reaſon," returned the lady, whom this vehement oratory had driven from her uſual reſource of playing with her fan or adjuſting her dreſs; "I declare, Mr. Fitz-
"oſborne, I can't bear to hear you talk
"ſo." If the declamation of the gentleman was pathetic, the ſilence of the lady was no leſs ſo; for it proceeded from a flood of tears.

After a few forced compliments on this trait of feeling, Edward reſumed the diſcourſe on the ſubject of the claims of duty, which were, he ſaid, often incompatible with thoſe of the heart. In the concluſion he ſeemed a little ſoftened

or-

on the harſh ſubject of eternal ſeparation: but then lady Madelina muſt come forward, unſay her former cruel aſperſions, and with her own hand lead her niece to the altar.

Reveal then, ye immortal Muſes! who inſpire great deſigns, what means achieved the glorious taſk of ſubjugating lady Madelina's narrow ſuſpicions, and reſtoring to her mind the beautiful ſimplicity of nature. Neither the reſplendent character nor the exalted birth of a Fitzoſborne could have gained the arduous victory, if powers ſupernal had not intervened. Firſt, Venus, queen of gentle devices! taught her prototype, lady Arabella, the uſe of feigned ſighs, artificial tears, and ſtudied faintings: while Eſculapius deſcended from Olympus, and, aſſuming the form of a ſmart phyſician, ſtepped out of an elegant chariot, and on viewing the patient,

after

after three ſagacious nods, whiſpered to the trembling aunt, that the young lady's diſorder, being purely mental, was beyond the power of the healing art. Reduced to the dire alternative of reſigning the fair ſufferer to a huſband or to the grave, the relenting lady Madelina did not long heſitate. The reſentment of injured honour was appeaſed by expreſſions which more nearly reſembled conceſſions than any that her ladyſhip had ever uttered; and Arabella ſoon appeared again in public with very little diminution of her charms, notwithſtanding her late alarming illneſs.

It muſt now be obſerved, that Mr. Fitzoſborne was entirely paſſive through the whole of this affair. Young ladies are apt to miſtake general politeneſs for ſignificant attentions, and gentlemen are not blamable for the tinder-like ſuſceptibility of their hearts. As ſoon as lady

lady Arabella's preference was viſible, he became more reſerved in his conduct, as all his friends could witneſs. Nay, he had even gone ſo far as to recall to her mind thoſe principles of action, which he gloried in avowing to be the acknowledged energies of his ſoul. Her unhappy predilection ſilenced his obſervations. What then! could he be blamed, or ought he to have ſuppreſſed that flow of liberal benevolence which a full heart prompted him to pour forth, and which undoubtedly captivated the amiable fair one? Recollecting the motives which an illiberal world might aſſign to his behaviour, he believed he ought to have done ſo, but it was now too late. The public knew the reſt. He truſted that the lady had ſufficiently conſulted her own happineſs to ſtudy the peculiarities of his character. It was above diſguiſe and abhorrent of reſtriction.

ſtriction. If ſhe had been miſtaken, he deplored the conſequences. But as the ſtrong characteriſtics of nature were engraven on his mind with indelible force, he could not be expected to change.

The claſſical embelliſhments of the heroic ages gave infinite advantages to deſcriptive narrations, to which the cold copyiſt of modern manners can never aſpire. How animating is the perſonification of winged loves, and choral graces, white-armed nymphs ſtrewing flowers, and ſportive fawns chanting an epithalamium, Juno on her radiant car, and Hymen in his ſaffron mantle! What can the brighteſt imagination do with ſuch uncouth figures as lawyers in tie-wigs, with their green bags and parchments, or even a little painted French milliner with her band-box? The Britiſh like the Grecian

bride

bride offers facrifices, but not to the deities of Complacence and nuptial Harmony—Her devoirs are too frequently directed to the fhrines of Fafhion and Vanity; and the merits of the villa, the town-houfe, the jewels, and the nuptial paraphernalia are difcuffed with all imaginable fcrupulofity, while the lover's character is overlooked. He on the other hand is too bufy in balancing the chances of the lady's fortune againft her father's demand of fettlement, and the poffibility of *privately* clearing off his moft preffing incumbrances, to confider his deftined wife in any other light than as a neceffary appendage, which entitles him to take poffeffion.

Every fcheme preparatory to lady Arabella's intended nuptials was conducted with the greateft decorum. Lady Madelina herfelf undertook the bufinefs of

of directing the settlements; and Mr. Fitzosborne, contenting himself with the power of putting a negative upon her determinations should the terms be unreasonable, showed little of the alacrity and rapture which a destined bridegroom is expected to assume. Various delays arose to retard the concluding ceremony; and the good-natured world began to doubt, whether the gentleman was most unwilling to part with his liberty, or lady Madelina with her fortune.

Lady Arabella enjoyed, in its fullest extent, the consequence which her present situation gave her. Some mornings she went a shopping to cheap warehouses; at others she was waited upon by different tradesmen at home: she ordered and counter-ordered; bought and returned; thought this monstrous pretty, and that monstrous frightful; gave as much trouble as her rank would

possibly

poſſibly enable her to impoſe, and then complained of the impertinence and impoſition of trades-people.

During one of the delays, which, as I have already obſerved, retarded the lighting of the Hymeneal torch, lady Arabella recollected, that her conqueſt over ſcience, philoſophy, and genius, was infinitely more arduous than Geraldine's eaſy faſcination of ſuch a thoughtleſs random youth as her brother. It next occurred to her, that ſhe ſhould prodigiouſly like to mortify her ſiſter's pretended ſuperiority in ſenſe and talents, by exhibiting a Fitzoſborne in her chains. The thought of an excurſion to Scotland as ſoon as ſhe was married, muſt be attended with many inconveniencies; and, what was ſtill more repugnant to her feelings, with the renunciation of much eclat and ſplendor. Beſide, it was moſt deſirable that the

exhi-

exhibition ſhould be made while ſhe was inveſted with full plenitude of power. An expreſs was, therefore, diſpatched to Scotland to requeſt, that a brother's hand would conſign her's to a huſband every way worthy of his alliance. The letter concluded with an acknowledgment of tender trepidations, which nothing but the preſence of her Geraldine could allay. Lady Madelina's increaſing infirmities rendered her unfit to be the depoſitory of her ſorrows; and her dear lady Fitzoſborne, her only friend, was infinitely too much in the intereſts of her happy brother, as ſhe ſtyled him, to treat her apprehenſive heart with ſufficient delicacy.

The Monteiths readily complied with a ſummons which indicated a perfect renewal of domeſtic harmony. Though the yellow teint of early autumn had juſt diffuſed a more pic-

tureſque

tureſque appearance over the romantic banks of Loch Lomond, and announced the joyous ſeaſon of the "hound and horn," a dangerous fall from his horſe had given the earl a tranſient diſguſt to field ſports: and though the blooming counteſs was by no means weary of her rural enjoyments and occupations, ſhe was too young, and too lovely, to reject an invitation to partake of the elegant varieties which London afforded. She intended to act in this, as ſhe had done at her preceding viſits; to taſte the Circean cup with moderation, and then to retire with dignity from the faſcinating banquet. But there are periods, when, if left to its own ſtability, the firmeſt foot would fail; and the beſt regulated mind, deprived of ſuperior guidance, may often deplore its own depravity.

CHAP. XXIV.

—— He reads much,
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men.
SHAKESPEARE.

LADY ARABELLA prepared her lover for the arrival of the expected ſtrangers. "I would not ſay ſo to other people," ſaid ſhe, "becauſe one ought to ſhow "reſpect to one's relations. But to be "ſure the Monteiths are the very odd-"eſt creatures in the world. My bro-"ther is well enough for one of your "fox-hunters, as they call them; but "the lady, O! ſhe is ſo fine and ſo ſen-"ſible, and ſo cautious, and ſo——I "don't know how—vaſtly diſagreeable; "I aſſure you, you will be highly di-"verted with her: pray obſerve her, "and tell me all you think of her; for "I ſhall not take any thing ill that you "ſay.

"ſay. She is prodigiouſly wiſe, you "muſt know. I hate wiſe people, at "leaſt ſuch wiſe people as ſhe is. Play "her off; I ſhall be vaſtly entertained."

Developing characters was Mr. Fitzoſborne's favourite amuſement; and it was one of his topics of complaint, that he had never ſince his return to England met with any perſon that was worth ſtudying. But after he had ſeen the Monteiths, he did not repeat that opinion. The intereſting beauty of the counteſs, her apparent happineſs, and viſible influence over her lord's affections, which even his careleſs manners could not diſguiſe, excited in the philoſophic mind of Fitzoſborne nearly the ſame emotions as thoſe which the arch Apoſtate felt on viewing Adam and Eve in Paradiſe: and, like him,

—— "Aſide he turn'd
"For envy; yet with jealous leer malign
"Ey'd them aſkance."

In

In one particular the resemblance was certainly incomplete. The superior intelligence of the fallen angel knew, that the happiness which he intended to destroy was real. Habitually sceptical, Fitzosborne doubted. He watched the varying turns of Geraldine's animated countenance, analyzed her manner and her expressions with the hope of discovering something to convince him that she was only a polished dissembler. For it was utterly repugnant to all his received ideas, that affection could really subsist between persons of discordant habits, or that principle could supply the place of attachment, and give equal uniformity to the conduct.

The joyous occasion which had summoned him to town gave lord Monteith a prodigious flow of spirits; and he certainly always appeared to least advantage when most inclined to take the lead

lead in converſation. When he was diſpoſed to talk, he never conſidered how far the indulgence of his own humour was agreeable to the company. His diſcourſe could only be intereſting to himſelf and lady Madelina; for it related to his own caſtle; how much he and Geraldine had improved it; how popular they were among their neighbours; and how they ſpent their time. He ſaid many ridiculous things, and uttered many expreſſions indicative of good nature and benevolence; yet, though he certainly did not intend it, retirement had transformed the gallant Monteith; and his wife and his little girls were ſtill the heroines of his tale. Meantime theounteſs appeared to be engaged by lady Arabella's frivolity. Her eye indeed frequently reverted to her lord. But whether her attention proceeded

 from

from anxiety or affection even Fitzofborne could not difcover.

His lordfhip at length grew tired; his fifter had exhaufted her hyperbolical rapture at this happy interview; and the converfation changing to places of public amufement allowed fome opening to the countefs. The opera was mentioned. Lady Arabella declared, that the new grand ballet was fo charming, that it abfolutely threw her into hyfterics. "I "proteft," continued fhe, "I don't "think I fhall dare to go again, for it "makes me downright nervous the next "day."

"I congratulate you," faid lady Monteith, "on the acquifition of a new "pleafure. You had ufed to profefs "yourfelf an enemy to mufic."

"O! I hate it ftill in a room, or "where there is but one performer.

"But

"But the opera is ſo different. There "the lights, and the company, and the "ſcenes, and the dreſſes, do ſo increaſe "the effect! And the dances are ſo fine, "and every body is ſo overcome, and "one feels ſo faſcinated!"

"The muſic I have been lately ac-"cuſtomed to," reſumed Geraldine, "is in a very different ſtyle. An old "Highlander playing upon his bagpipe, "and the voices of two or three Scotch "girls chaunting one of their ſimple "ditties, which reverberates among our "rocks, convey to me a more perfect "idea of the powers of melody, than the "ſcenes you deſcribe. And though I "hope frequently to viſit the opera "while in London, I much doubt whe-"ther my ſenſibility can be ſo ſtrongly "affected there as it has frequently been "during my evening rambles about "James-town."

 "I hope,

"I hope, madam," ſaid lady Madelina, "that your ladyſhip never *walks* "beyond the limits of your own park."

"James-town is but a little way from "the caſtle," replied the counteſs, not immediately entering into the force of this obſervation; "I go there moſt days, "and the walk is much pleaſanter than "the drive."

"It is very right, niece," obſerved lady Madelina, in a tone of ſtricter authority, "that you ſhould aſſiſt your "dependants; but you ſhould do it like "a gentlewoman; and too frequent in-"tercourſe breeds familiarity and con-"tempt."

"I have fortunately not found fami-"liarity and contempt ſynonimous," reſumed lady Monteith, who, though generally ſilently aquieſcent, ſeemed on the preſent occaſion diſpoſed to defend her own conduct. "I appear to my

"colony

"colony in one uniform character; and "however frequent my visits, or in "whatever style I make them, a friend "is not unwelcome, and a benefactress "need not fear contempt. Continual "intercourse creates a mutual interest. "I thoroughly enter into their characters. "Beside, I acquire much knowledge in "various particulars, which those who "are not personally acquainted with "humble life can never accurately pos-"sess."

"And of what use is that knowledge?" inquired lady Madelina.

"It may be applied to various pur-"poses. It teaches me the value of "time. Because while we are studying "amusements to get rid of what we feel "to be an incumbrance, the poverty of "the labourer makes him conscious of "its importance. He knows that he "cannot waste an hour without finding

"his daily food abridged. And when "I see the œconomical contrivances "which necessity teaches, the humble "comforts which stand instead of lux-"uries, and the cheerful patience with "which real inconveniencies are borne "by those who know no happier lot, I "cannot (at least immediately) become "fastidious and extravagant."

"The unfortunate sensibility of my "temper," said lady Arabella, "would "never permit me to frequent such "places. 'You certainly must have very "strong nerves, sister. I protest, when "I have seen several little dirty, starved, "naked children, peeping out of those "smoky hovels which stand by the road "side, I have often thought that it "would be great mercy to shoot them, "as one does worn-out horses."

"To shoot them!" exclaimed most of the company.

"Yes.'"

"Yes!" reſumed lady Arabella; "for "only think what a miſerable life their's "muſt be."

"Did you never ſee any of theſe poor "little creatures merry?" inquired the counteſs.

"O yes! the little ſavages grinned "ſometimes, and jumped about like "monkeys; and with juſt as much "ſenſe; for if they thought at all, they "muſt be miſerable."

Geraldine recollected the ſentiment, that "where ignorance is bliſs," it is both cruel and fooliſh to impart a knowledge which diſcovers wretchedneſs. But while ſhe was conſidering how beſt to point out thoſe comforts which opulence and intelligence might impart to the poor, without creating deſires unſuitable to their ſtations, her reflections were interrupted by an harangue of Fitzoſborne.

 "Nature,

" Nature, madam," ſaid he, addreſſing himſelf to lady Arabella, " is not " a niggard; though the imbecility of " political inſtitutions and the corrupt " ſtate of ſociety frequently confine her " beneficent views. Theſe infant ſavages " enjoy bleſſings to which perhaps their " oppreſſors are ſtrangers. Health, " natural liberty, exemption from care, " and a happy ignorance of all the re- " ſtraints which cuſtom impoſes, and all " the falſe indulgencies which affluence " requires. Their manners are unde- " praved, their inclinations unſophiſti- " cated. I ſhould think theſe obſcure " cots the choſen abodes of innocence " and virtue."

" That is rather too liberal a con- " jecture," returned lady Monteith, beaming upon the ſuppoſed champion of the equal dealings of Providence a complacent ſmile. " My long reſidence " in

"in retirement allows me positively to "contradict the popular notion, that "the country is the seat of Arcadian "happiness and purity, though much "may be done to ameliorate the con- "dition of the lower classes of society; "and I am convinced, that residing "among them is one of the most pro- "bable means of effecting that import- "ant design."

"I perfectly agree with your lady- "ship's sentiments, particularly when "the poor, like the fortunate vassals of "Monteith, may contemplate exalted "rank without fear of imbibing exotic "vices." The countess blushed, and bowed at this compliment, without recollecting, that it might be intended for her lord. Fitzosborne watched the sudden emotion. "Can vanity," said he to himself, "be the ruling foible? If

" it be, the ſmothered flame ſhall
" blaze."

Lord Monteith now took part in the converſation. " I hope, Sir, you mean
" to put your own principles in practice,
" and that we ſhall be very good friends
" when you come to reſide at Kinloch
" Caſtle. It is within eighty miles of
" us, and we may frequently join in
" parties upon the lakes and the moors.
" I was there once. I thought it a hor-
" rid place with its canopied ſtate beds,
" and worm-eaten tapeſtry; but you
" will give it a more agreeable air when
" you live there."

" Live there!" ſhrieked lady Arabella. " What! live at Kinloch caſtle?
" What a barbarous idea!"

" O you are thinking of times of old,
" poor Bella. Yes! they were barba-
" rous, I'll grant. But it will be very
" different

"different when you shall be living "there with a good husband, from what "it was when you wanted to set off from "it in search of one. Poor Bella! I "remember your peeping through the "painted glass between the huge stone "window-frames, and wondering, whe-"ther the object that looked black "at a great distance was a cow or a "gentleman. Poor Bella! If you are "any thing of a knight-errant, Fitz-"osborne, you would have liked to have "seen her shut up in that castle, like an "enchanted lady, waiting for some gal-"lant Longsword to set her at liberty. "But I suppose Longsword was be-"nighted, or set upon by Saracens, for "he never found his way to the castle— "Did he, Bella?"

My lord had now recovered the conversation; and no common effort could get it out of his hands, till lady Arabella

very gravely told him, that his raillery was miſplaced. His lordſhip then, ſtarting up, gave his ſiſter a good-humoured kiſs, declared that he did not mean to diſpleaſe her, promiſed to ſay no more about the caſtle that nobody could get out of, or the knight that never could get in; and whiſpering her, that he then thought her the prettieſt priſoner he ever ſaw in his life, he ſummoned the counteſs and hurried her back to Portland-place.

Lady Arabella ſcarcely waited till they were out of ſight, to aſk if they were not ſtrange creatures.

"The counteſs," ſaid Fitzoſborne, "is moſt amazingly beautiful."

"She muſt be very much improved "then," returned lady Arabella; "for "it uſed to be doubted whether ſhe was "even pretty. But I believe gentlemen "who have lived much abroad have a "*ſingular* taſte in beauty."

"There

"There are ſome forms," ſaid Fitz-oſborne, bowing with a ſignificant air, "which would be eſteemed lovely in "every region. Lady Monteith's chief "beauty is the ſparkling intelligence of "her countenance; for certainly her "features are not regular."

"No," rejoined her ladyſhip a little appeaſed, "her features are not regular; "and ſome people will call that intelli-"gence in her countenance conceit."

"Is ſhe counted vain?"

"Inſufferably ſo. It is her ruling "foible. Every body who is acquainted "with her knows it. I wonder you did "not diſcover it."

Fitzoſborne promiſed to conſider her character with deeper attention at the next opportunity. "If vanity," ſaid he to himſelf, "be indeed her predominant "fault, it is impoſſible that her apparent "happineſs can be ſincere. The vanity of

"a ſu-

" a ſuperior mind is not gratified by common incenſe; and Monteith ſeems too thoughtleſs to diſcern her peculiar excellencies, and too ſelf-engroſſed to give them their appropriate praiſe. I ſuſpect that his perſonal advantages attracted her inexperience, and that her judgment now ſecretly reprobates the premature choice."

Lord Monteith's opinion of the intended diſpoſal of his ſiſter was, that it was a very well-ſchemed thing. "She was juſt a fit match," ſaid he, "for a younger brother. Fitzoſborne ſeems to have a great deal of ſenſe, and we all know that Arabella is not one of king Solomon's family. She will, perhaps, prove a little refractory at firſt; but he will conduct himſelf cleverly, and ſoon convince her that the huſband is the ſuperior character. You think ſo, Geraldine, don't you?"

"O, un-

"O, undoubtedly!" But, with whatever certainty the countefs could fpeak of her own fituation, fhe felt extremely doubtful as to the happy iffue of lady Arabella's profpects. In fpite of the referve of her lover's character, their diffimilarity was evident. She was trifling, fuperficial, felfifh, and unguarded: with refpect to Fitzofborne, whenever the thick veil with which he chofe to obfcure himfelf admitted a cafual difcovery, fuperior intelligence and liberality of fentiment were apparent. "I "know," faid Geraldine to herfelf, "that Arabella's temper is impetuous, "her prejudices are rooted, and her "views of connubial happinefs are too "fuperficial to make her even wifh to "affimilate her tafte to that of her huf- "band's, or to affign any merit to com- "placent acquiefcence. His enlarged "underftanding muft difcover her fool- "ifh

"ish pertinacity; and the generous feel-
"ing that always accompanies a liberal
"mind will be perpetually wounded by
"the contracted ideas of a selfish heart.
"Her ridiculous opinion of the constant
"incense which beauty demands pre-
"cludes all hope of her improvement.
"She will be continually requiring a
"flatterer, and he a companion. I am
"certain, that even now he strongly
"feels the disproportion of their minds.
"What harsh expressions did he utter
"against the oppressors of the poor.
"They were, doubtless, pointed at her
"extravagant notions, which seemed to
"degrade them from the rank of ra-
"tional creatures. Indeed, though his
"mercenary design somewhat debases
"his character, I pity Mr. Fitzosborne.
"He appears to be well worthy of a
"happier fate."

The

The chain of her reflections was here broken by his lordſhip's obſerving, that ſhe was as dull and as bad company as his future brother-in-law.

CHAP. XXV

Calm thinking villains, whom no faith can fix,
Of crooked councils and dark politics.

POPE.

FITZOSBORNE called to return the honour of lord Monteith's viſit juſt at the time when his lordſhip was gone out on ſome important buſineſs. This engagement had been diſcuſſed the preceding evening, but philoſophers are very apt to be abſent. He inquired if the counteſs were at home, and on ſending in his name he was admitted. There could be no impropriety in receiving a viſit from a gentleman who was ſoon to become a relation; and Geraldine had been ſufficiently intereſted by his appearance to be anxious to know if the eſtimate that ſhe had formed of his character were juſt.

Previous

Previous to his arrival, ſhe had been amuſing herſelf with a harp which had lain ſilent for ſome years. It had been new ſtrung by an eminent hand, and was become capable of producing the moſt raviſhing harmony. Fitzoſborne was an idolator of muſic. The ſkill of the counteſs was too well known to admit of diſqualifying ſpeeches. She readily complied with his requeſt to exhibit the powers of her inſtrument, and after a graceful prelude accompanied it with her voice in the following ſonnet:

SONNET TO MAY.

Come May, the empire of the earth aſſume,
  Be crown'd with flowers as univerſal queen;
  Take from freſh budded groves their tender
    green,
Beſpangled with Pomona's richeſt bloom,
And form thy veſture. Let the ſun illume
  The dew-drops glittering in the blue ſerene,
  And let them hang, like orient pearls, between
Thy locks beſprent with Flora's beſt perfume.

Attend

Attend your ſovereign's ſteps, ye balmy gales!
O'er her ambroſial floods of fragrance pour;
Let livelier verdure animate the vales,
And brighter hues embelliſh every flower;
And hark, the concert of the woodland hails,
All gracious May! thy preſence, and thy power.

She enforced the laſt line with the whole compaſs of her melodious voice. The apartment reverberated with the magic ſounds. She pauſed. Fitzoſborne ſeemed loſt in ſpeechleſs ecſtaſy. He raiſed his eyes, ſuffuſed with tears, and they met thoſe of the counteſs.—He retired to the window to recover from his emotion, while ſhe formed the ineffectual wiſh, that Arabella had poſſeſſed a mind capable of eſtimating and rewarding ſuch refined ſenſibility.

It was ſome moments before Fitzoſborne was able to renew the converſation. At length he heſitatingly articulated, "You devote many hours "every day to this charming ſcience?"

"No.

" No, indeed! I very ſeldom play, " unleſs to perfect myſelf in a new tune, " or to amuſe lord Monteith."

" Is lord Monteith fond of muſic?"

" Paſſionately ſo."

" I did not ſuſpect ſo. Of what " kind?"

" Every kind: from the loftieſt " compoſitions of Handel to the ſim- " pleſt ſtrains of ruſtic harmony. But " I preſume, ſir, your taſte is more diſ- " criminating; and being formed upon " the refined Italian model, it requires " artful combination and ſtriking con- " traſt."

" It requires, madam, ſuch an exalted " gratification as it has juſt enjoyed." He then roſe, as if intending to take leave, when a miniature of Lucy Evans, which hung over the chimney glaſs, appeared firſt to attract his eye; and he

exclaimed, "You paint, I know; do "you take likenesses?"

"Very bad ones," said the countess, handing to him the picture. "And "when you view that juvenile perform- "ance with attention, you will say so. "But it is highly valuable to me, since "it gives me a faint resemblance of a "very estimable friend."

"I know," said Fitzosborne, fixing his eyes upon her with a most penetrating glance, "that your soul was really "formed for friendship. I am a phy- "siognomist, madam."

"I do not suspect you of magical "skill," replied Geraldine laughing, "for I am very much inclined to con- "trovert your opinion. I never had "but one intimate friendship; and I "meet with my Lucy too seldom, and "our epistolary communications are too "limited, to admit of our attachment "im-

"imprinting any ftrong lines upon my
" countenance; even allowing, what I
" am not inclined to admit, that mental
" habits impreſs indelible marks upon
" the muſcular organs."

" I muſt enter upon a defence of my
" art, madam; and if I am betrayed
" into any improprieties, remember
" yourſelf only can be to blame. You
" have long been attached to this lady,
" and ſhe is ſenſible, animated, and pe-
" netrating."

" If you go on with ſuch fortunate
" gueſſes, I ſhall begin to retract, and
" believe you poſſeſſed of the power of
" divination."

" I only wiſh to convince you, that
" a conſtant perſeverance in one train
" of thought muſt give a correct habit
" to the mind, and diffuſe a ſerene
" dignity over the countenance. And
" certainly the colliſion of two ingenuous
" minds

"minds will brighten the qualities of "each. The ſoul ever ſeeks its coun- "terpart, and tries to aſſimilate itſelf to "what it admires. Your correſpondence "with a perſon ſuch as you allow this "lady to be, accounts for the ſparkling "intelligence of your manner, and all "the lively emanations of your faſcinat- "ing wit."

The counteſs replied with a bluſhing ſmile, "I believe you are labouring "under a little illuſion. You certainly "miſtake me for lady Arabella; or are "you ſo accuſtomed to compliment, "that you involuntarily adopt that "ſtrain to every body?"

"You may miſtake my character, "madam," ſaid Fitzoſborne; "but it "is impoſſible that I can ſuppoſe you "are lady Arabella." A deep ſigh eſcaped at thoſe words. He heſitated, and then proceeded: "I can, however,

"entreat

"entreat your pardon with a better "grace, as I did not ſeek an opportu- "nity of expreſſing the ſentiments "which I ſtrongly feel. If there be "any indecorum in admiring you and "requeſting your friendſhip, recollect, "madam, I ſhare that guilt with the "original of this charming portrait."

The counteſs immediately replied: "Every branch of lord Monteith's "family has indubitable claims on my "attentions; and, madam, I can aſſure "you, that his lordſhip regards you "with the ſincereſt eſteem, and that he "is impatient for an event to take place "which will cement his friendſhip by "the bond of alliance."

"It is not in my power to make lady "Arabella happy——," ſaid Fitzoſborne, fixing his eyes upon the ground, and ſeeming to plunge into a gloomy chaos of doubt; "but I will hope for the beſt.

"We know, that 'whatever is is right.' "As the world is now constituted, events "are not in our own hands." He then rose, and took leave with a more profound sigh than any he had before uttered. "Poor man!" ejaculated lady Monteith, "his feelings are too acute "for happiness. He will become a "prey to the most morbid melancholy, "and his inattentive wife will consider "his dejection as a sufficient excuse for "her dissipation. I see he is forced "into this fatal connexion by his friends. "Why does he not exert the natural in-"dependence of his energetic character, "and contemn the mercenary bond? "How happy would he be with such a "partner as my Lucy!"

Could lady Monteith have penetrated the dark disguises of premeditating villany, how different would have been the conclusion of her mental soliloquy!

She

She would as ſoon have pointed out an alliance between the meek dignified Octavia, and the inſidious, cruel, impenetrable Tiberius. And now let me for a few moments exerciſe that digreſſive privilege which I have claimed for moral purpoſes.

I would aſk the accurate judges of mankind, what ſtriking traits of ſuperior eminence are yet viſible in Fitzoſborne's conduct? What generous ſentiment falling ſpontaneouſly from the tongue? what artleſs diſcovery of the genuine emotions of an upright worthy heart? Are they charmed with the morals of a man, whoſe ambiguous expreſſions can only be interpreted by ſuppoſing that he ſecretly deſpiſes the woman whom he avowedly purſues? Contempt for ſuch mercenary treachery muſt be the natural ſentiment in unſophiſticated minds; and contempt muſt riſe into abhorrence in

every breaſt that is uncorrupted by the laxity of modern principles, if they ſuppoſe that his ardent commendations of a *married* lady were intended to convey to her heart the audacious idea, that they proceeded from the warm emotions of preference.

The mind of Geraldine was unſophiſticated and incorrupt. She ſaw his reluctance to his intended marriage, and interpreted his praiſes as he deſigned ſhe ſhould. Yet neither contempt nor abhorrence aroſe in her breaſt. On the contrary, though ſteadily determined to prevent any inſinuation to lady Arabella's diſadvantage, and to repreſs every expreſſion inconſiſtent with the pure dignity of a matron, ſhe felt for the wiley Fitzoſborne a mixture of pity and eſteem.

——O Flattery!
How ſoon thy ſoft inſinuating oil
Supples the tougheſt ſouls!

What

What better method can I adopt to convince the younger part of my readers of the neceſſity of ſhutting their ears to the ſyren ſong, than placing the example of lady Monteith full in their view? Adorned with every natural and acquired accompliſhment; "chaſte as the iſicle on Dian's temple;" attached to her huſband; the fondeſt of mothers; domeſtic, prudent, and religious. What profanation even to *ſuppoſe* ſuch conſummate excellence open to an illicit attack! Yet Fitzoſborne, deeply verſed in the ſcience of human frailty, no ſooner perceived that her vanity liſtened to his blandiſhments, than he not only determined to *aſſail* her principles, but felt a firm conviction that his enterprize would *ſucceed.*

Her delicacy required, and his duplicity meditated, a covert aſſault. He perceived on recollection, that he had

been too unguarded in the preceding conversation, and he resolved to follow the path which she had pointed out, by affecting great respect for lady Arabella, and cultivating the friendship of lord Monteith. He despised his lordship's abilities too much to fear that his observation would be any impediment to his views; and his own assumption of the title of a husband would only give an unprincipled seducer more unsuspected opportunities of forwarding his insidious designs.

His visits were now generally made when he knew that lord Monteith was at home; and if his lordship was abroad, he only left a card for the countess. His behaviour to her, when they met in company, was pointedly respectful and reserved. But care was always taken to show that such reserve was the effect of painful effort. By studiously avoiding every

every opportunity of engaging her in conversation, and by a marked neglect of those offices of general civility which the laws of politeness prescribed, he appeared fearful of trusting to the susceptibility of his own heart. He seemed only anxious to guard his mind from the intrusion of every image inconsistent with his fidelity to lady Arabella. His eyes were fixed upon her, as if he hoped to discover something worthy of his attention. Sometimes, indeed, they wandered to lady Monteith; but if she observed him, they were instantly withdrawn, with an expression of regret for the involuntary dereliction.

His aim was to exhibit a superior mind, inflexible in principle, but tenderly susceptible, maintaining a severe struggle, and determined to be victorious. Lady Monteith was so far the dupe of his artifices, as to view his conduct

in the light that he deſired. But ſhe alſo drew from it a conſequence which he did not intend. She fancied his apparent efforts were ſucceſsful, and ſhe now only regretted, that Arabella wanted both the inclination and the capacity to improve her delicate ſituation to her own advantage.

It has been obſerved, that the ſeducer ſeveral times conquers his unwarrantable deſires in the courſe of his guilty purſuit. Compelled to adopt diſguiſes, to conſult opportunities, to avoid premature diſcoveries, the pain of repeated reſtrictions, impoſed for the purpoſes of vice, is greater than would attend the virtuous reſolution of abandoning the inſidious project. This obſervation was eminently juſt in the inſtance of Fitzoſborne. His ſoul was not whirled along by the tempeſt of paſſion. Beauty did not excite violent emotion. Senſe

and ſweetneſs carried with them no irreſiſtible charm. His frigid heart was too cold and ſelfiſh to prompt his diabolical invention, or to extenuate his crimes. His vices were ſyſtematic, the reſult of deſign, guided by method, ſanctioned by ſophiſtry, and originating from the covert war which he waged, not merely againſt the chaſtity, but alſo againſt the principles of his victims: not ſolely againſt their reputation, their peace of mind, and their temporal proſpects, but againſt their notions of rectitude and religion, againſt thoſe immortal hopes which ſuſtain the afflicted and ſooth the corroding pangs of repentant guilt.

To lady Arabella, unconſcious of his deſigns, Fitzoſborne's increaſed attentions gave a livelier pleaſure, from the idea that he intended by that means to

convey a marked contempt of the countefs. Her elation would have been more complete, if he would have cordially joined in thofe remarks on the perfon and behaviour of Geraldine which fupplied lady Madelina's domeftic party with an agreeable topic for converfation. She recollected, however, with fatisfaction, that, if he did not *join* in thefe cenfures, he did not contradict them, and the extenuating apologies which he fometimes urged might rather be termed an attempt to "damn with faint praife," than a friendly defence. She was confirmed in her opinion, that her admirer fecretly defpifed lady Monteith's pretenfions to mental fuperiority, by obferving, that her *bons mots* and remarks paffed equally unregarded, while her own were fure of having in him one attentive liftener. Lady Arabella's views

of

of life were neither very accurate nor extenſive. Yet ſhe had ſome ſuſpicion, that the connubial bond operated as a powerful ſoporific upon the deference, obſervance, and tenderneſs, which lovers ſometimes, even in this refined age, think proper to aſſume. Her dear viſcounteſs had aſſured her, that if Edward's behaviour as a huſband equalled his attentions as an admirer, they would certainly be pointed at as an *exemplary* couple; for that at preſent all the world knew him by the title of lady Arabella Macdonald's ſlave. No one more ſtrongly felt thoſe paſſions which Pope affirms to be the predominate features in the mind of women, "the love of pleaſure" and "the love of ſway," than her ladyſhip. But ſince it was at leaſt doubtful, whether ſhe could continue to be "queen for life," ſhe was deſirous to protract the period which acknow-

ledged her right of government; and, as the gentleman was not very urgent for an early day, the lady's ſenſibility was not hurt by repeated denials.

Another unexpected cauſe of delay at this time intervened. Lady Madelina had often declared, that as ſoon as ſhe had ſettled her dear niece to her ſatiſfaction, ſhe ſhould have entirely done with a world of which ſhe repeatedly aſſured her friends ſhe was quite weary. Twenty years before, on her firſt marriage with her ever-lamented ſir Simon Frazer, ſhe had uſed ſimilar expreſſions. She then ſaid that ſhe only lived for his ſake; and if ſhe were ſo unfortunate as to loſe him, her "occupation would be gone," and exiſtence would become an inſupportable burden. But as that deprecated event did happen without any laſting change in her ladyſhip's apparent reliſh for the good things of this life, it

was

was ſuſpected, that twenty years hence her affectionate heart might find ſome pretext for that ſtrong attachment to her perſon, which her exceſſive attention to her own health and ſafety rendered viſible to all who knew her. When the reader, therefore, conſiders the infinite ſucceſſion of laſt plans, and final engagements, which ſhe would probably have pleaded, his ſenſibility will be leſs hurt to find, that death dealt by her, as he did by "the fair lady in coſtly robes," mentioned in the good old ſong, by compelling her to truſt future events to that Providence whoſe ſuperintendence had not been her favourite ſpeculation.

I have obſerved, that the ſettlements were drawn up under lady Madelina's eye, who ſeemed deſirous of extending the ſupremacy which ſhe had uniformly exerciſed over every perſon with whom ſhe was connected (except her niece) beyond

beyond the grave. She had multiplied entails, and conſidered every poſſible event of contention, ſeparation, divorce, and ſecond marriage. She had explored the family pedigree, picked out the moſt ſonorous hereditary chriſtian names, and ſtringing three or four together, which were capable of liquid pronunciation, ſhe ordered, that they ſhould be adopted by the ſucceſſive ſons and daughters of this intended marriage, on pain of forfeiting all right to inheritance. Jointure, pin-money, and alimony took up ſeveral pages, and the finiſhed deed had more the appearance of a truce between two inveterate enemies than a recognition of mutual confidence and eſteem. The very ſight of theſe formidable parchments muſt have annihilated the whole court of Cytherea; but fortunately the modern Hymen never brings his cauſes before that tribunal,

which

which is now exclusively employed in trying affairs of libertinism, or, as it is politely termed, gallantry.

Lady Madelina perused the stupendous performance with delight; weighed the technical meaning of every word which the useful tautology of the law had introduced; and, trusting, that the united names of Fitzosborne, Frazer, and Macdonald might sound in courts and castles a thousand years hence, declared that she was *perfectly satisfied.* It is supposed, that the pronunciation of those words, which she had never before been known to use, occasioned a mortal revulsion in her oracular organs, for she was found speechless next morning. Lady Arabella's determined resolution of enjoying the pleasures of a public breakfast prevented her from attending to the assurances of her aunt's woman, that such a change must be inevitably

followed

followed by mortal confequences. She contented herfelf with leaving pofitive orders to be immediately fent for if lady Madelina grew worfe, and drove off with lady Fitzofborne, who convinced her that fhe was perfectly right; for, as the patient could not fpeak, company could do her no fervice. The office of fmoothing the bed of death devolved on Geraldine, who haftened to the houfe of mourning at the firft intimation of what had happened, and arrived a few moments before lady Madelina expired.

CHAP. XXVI.

Let then the fair one beautifully c.y,
In Magdalene's loofe hair and lifted eye.

POPE.

THE melancholy event related in my laft Chapter was fpeedily conveyed to the gay groupe whom the elegant *dejeuné* of the duchefs of A. had affembled on the flowery banks of Thames. It was announced to lady Arabella with very little preparation; for as, in compliance with the wifhes of the company, though declaredly out of fpirits, fhe had juft confented to exhibit her own fine perfon and her lover's to the beft advantage by ftanding up in a reel, no one fuppofed but that fhe might hear the fad tale with decent compofure. It was, however, quite the

the reverſe, and her ſenſibility now became as remarkable, as her fortitude had been before. She fainted, fell into hyſterics, wept, recovered, and was at laſt conveyed apparently lifeleſs to her carriage. Every creature preſent partook in her concern for lady Madelina's death, for it certainly ſpoiled a moſt delightful party. Though the company endeavoured to recover their ſpirits after the fair mourner was removed, all attempts at brilliancy was prevented by the unavoidable intruſion of ſerious ideas. The ladies grew as ſtupid as if they were at church. Death's heads and phyſicians intruded into every ſubject; and the laſt topic of converſation that was ſtarted by the gentlemen was a diſcuſſion of the merits of the patent coffin.

Lady Arabella was accompanied home by the Fitzoſbornes. The viſcounteſs engaged in the friendly taſk

of

of confolation, while Edward, leaning back with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon the lovely fufferer, (I fuppofe) more deeply fympathized in her forrow; for the harangues of the comforter were only interrupted by lady Arabella's fobs and fighs, which did not abate in violence, though lady Fitzofborne was diffufe on the folly of grieving for what was fure to happen, and therefore what nobody could prevent. The carriage at length ftopped. Lady Arabella was fupported up ftairs, fwallowed more hartfhorn, and at length became fufficiently compofed to make inquiries after the particulars of an event of which fhe had only yet received a general account.

Lady Madelina's firft gentlewoman, a Macdonald by an indirect defcent, entered on the fad recital. Nothing could be more capable of being com-

preffed

preſſed into a ſmall compaſs ; but Mrs. Margaret was eminently gifted with that ſpecies of oratory which may be termed expanſion. Her poor dear lady's merits, her poor dear lady's ſufferings, the confidence her poor dear lady placed in her faithful ſervices, and a firm conviction, that ſhe never ſhould ſurvive her poor dear lady: theſe topics were expatiated upon, till Arabella became a little diſpleaſed that any one ſhould take up grief juſt at the inſtant herſelf had laid it down. It came out in the courſe of the narration, that from ſome peculiar circumſtances lady Monteith had adopted an opinion, that the ſpark of life was not actually extinguiſhed; but that the ſpeedy exertion of proper means might revive the ſuſpended animation. To this opinion the phyſicians, who had been ſummoned, lent ſome countenance; and the humanity of the

counteſs

counteſs prompted her not only to command theſe applications, but by her preſence to prevent the proceedings which are ſometimes injudiciouſly adopted at the firſt moment of apparent diſſolution.

Mrs. Margaret was not only convinced of the inefficacy of the attempt, but, conſcientiouſly believing it to be very preſumptuous, had refuſed her ſervices, with ſome little ſenſe of indignity at having had them required, and keen ſuſceptibility at the ſuppoſition that ſhe could bear to ſtay in the room where her poor dear lady lay. Arabella joined in her opinion; and the diſcourſe changed from the virtues of Mrs. Margaret and the deceaſed, to the wickedneſs of diſturbing the dead, and the concern which the affectionate niece now felt, that her dear aunt had none of

her

her *own* family to attend her in her laſt moments.

The failure of lady Monteith's efforts relieved Arabella from what might more properly be called a vexation than a diſtreſs; and her ſofter feelings, freed from diſagreeable embarraſſments, had leiſure to flow in the delicate channels which etiquette preſcribes to grief. She mourned for one fortnight in the ſweeteſt manner imaginable, dreſſed in a cloſe cap with her bouquet ſtuck on one ſide, her robe looſely faſtened, and her arms hanging negligently. All her viſitants agreed, that ſhe looked prettier than ever, and Fitzoſborne was continually reminded of thoſe well known lines which characterize the fair ſex, as deſigned to "be adorned by diſtreſs" and "dreſſed moſt amiably in tears."

But

But it was not over the unconſcious tomb that this fair flowret drooped. The increaſed ſenſibility of the preſent age, grown too fragile to encounter the morbid contagion of death, declines all intimate acquaintance with ſpectacles of mortality, and deputes hireling hands to perform thoſe offices which the ſterner fortitude of former times claimed as the peculiar privilege of affection and kindred. My attachment to obſolete manners inclines me to refer the univerſal cuſtom of flying from the bed of death and its melancholy appendages, to ſome other cauſe than exceſſive tenderneſs. I ſuſpect the faſtidiouſneſs of indulgence, accuſtomed to baſk in the ſunſhine of life, and bereft of ſufficient energy even to wiſh to procure a defence againſt the ſtorm. I diſcover the enervating habits of diſſipation, the cant of flattery, and the ſophiſms of ſelf-de-

 luſion.

lufion. Beauty will not contemplate the fixed raylefs eye, left the recollection fhould obfcure the brilliancy of its own: youth and health refufe to be acquainted with the livid cheek, which preaches the importance of the paffing hours; and gaiety abjures all knowledge of the clay-cold reliques of the human form, left the fearful fentence of "fuch fhalt thou be" fhould palfy the graceful ftep, arreft the fwift career of levity, and render the whifper of adulation uninterefting.

Lady Arabella's firft tears flowed beneath her brother's roof; but her extreme fufceptibility foon required a frefh afylum. Lady Monteith was the worft comforter in the world; and fhe was convinced that her poor fpirits would be quite overcome, if fhe did not get amongft people a little more like other folks. Geraldine indeed had performed

the

the office of a consoler to her Lucy with tolerable success; but the retired daughter of a country clergyman, and a fashionable belle, are different characters: and either the simplicity of the countess did not discriminate, or some secret spark of ill-nature prevented her from adopting the proper method of treating her present guest. She permitted lady Arabella's tears to stream without any admonition that they might dim her eyes or injure her complexion; and in the most violent paroxysms of grief she strove to soften her emotions by leading the discourse to her dear aunt's affection for her, and anxious solicitude to promote her happiness. She had once the inhumanity to suggest the idea, that the separated spirit would be afflicted by witnessing the sorrow of surviving friends; and that the violent indulgence of extreme regret might be construed

to proceed from a want of due ſubmiſſion to the Supreme Diſpoſer of events. She had indeed ſucceſsfully expatiated on theſe topics to Miſs Evans. The countenance of that artleſs girl aſſumed an angelic compoſure whilſt liſtening to the ſolemn ſentiments; and her hands and eyes uplifted in meek reſignation ſeemed to ſay, " I will not impede the " beatitude of my mother, nor murmur " at the diſpenſations of my God."

But in the preſent inſtance the awful alluſion produced very horrific effects. Lady Arabella's ideas of " things unſeen" were extremely confuſed. She had never had time to inveſtigate the ſubject herſelf; and, from ſome arguments which Mr. Fitzoſborne had uſed, ſhe was inclined to hope, that the vague notions which ſhe had picked up in her early years were purely chimerical terrors, the effect of low prejudices. She, therefore,

fore, replied to the consolatory arguments of the countess with a shriek of apprehension; besought her in future to avoid such shocking expressions; and, looking round her, as if in expectation of seeing lady Madelina's ghost, she became so fearful of having a visionary attendant, that she durst not move from one room to another without being accompanied by a corporeal guard.

At Mr. Fitzosborne's next visit she expatiated on the premeditated cruelty of lady Monteith, who chose the very period of her being so low that she could hardly support herself, to afflict her by naming subjects that she never could bear. She was perfectly innocent, she said; had never hurt any body, nor committed any crime in her life; and why need she be talked to about separated spirits, and religion, as if she were the greatest sinner in the world? Lady

Monteith had even hinted, that there would be an indecorum in her going into public immediately after the interment of an aunt, who had to her supplied the tenderness and protection of the maternal character; and she was certain that the funeral was delayed, not so much out of respect, as to keep her immured, and to make her break her heart, which was much too refined and tender to endure those forms of woe to which stronger minds might submit. In fine, she enjoined Fitzosborne to state to lady Monteith the impropriety of her conduct, and to convince her how wrong it was to talk about disagreeable things which she could not be sure were true. Edward undertook the office, but advised lady Arabella not to be too sanguine of success. Prejudices, he said, were stubborn things to contend with, and lady Monteith had unfortunately imbibed several.

ſeveral. He complimented lady Arabella on her more enlarged notions, but conjured her to conceal a ſuperiority which might probably excite envy; and in caſe of any future attempts to inſpire her with ſuperſtitious terrors, he wiſhed her either to give a ſudden turn to the converſation, or to enjoy the triumph of reaſon over bigotry in a dignified ſilence.

Fitzoſborne entered on the taſk enjoined, with the cruel avidity of a ſanguinary mind, bent on deſtroying what it was neceſſitated to revere. His obſervations on lady Monteith's behaviour, enabled him clearly to develope her character; and as he founded his hopes of ſucceſs on her evident love of praiſe, he was ſenſible that the unaffected ſincerity of her religious principles would prove a ſteady bulwark too powerful to be aſſailed by open attacks, and which he muſt either undermine or abandon

his purfuit. He perceived, that though her vivacity at times tranfcended the limits of rigid prudence, even in the wildeft flights of gaiety the moft guarded ridicule on facred fubjects was unpalatable; and though the engroffing amufements of polite life afforded lefs leifure for reflection and devotional exercifes during her ftay in town, fhe ever paffed a diffipated Sunday with evident regret, and appeared to feel every omiffion of duty with the felf-reproach of confcious error, rather than to avow her neglect with the bold air of one who expects to be applauded for liberality, and exemption from prefcribed forms. The footing on which he was received in the family gave him frequent occafions of perceiving, that, though fhe did not burft out into frequent cenfures againft immorality, fhe never treated a grofs deviation from morality and decorum with that levity

of

of remark which warrants the conclusion, that the obferver's principles are too relaxed to view flagitious conduct with proper abhorrence. Though no one knew better how to wing the shaft of raillery, and to encourage "sport "that wrinkled care derides," wit was with her the companion of unreproved pleafure, not the child of unreftrained liberty. Its frolic hand was ever taught to refpect the palladium of virtue and religion.

The event which Geraldine had lately witneffed confirmed her habitual reverence for ferious fubjects. Without profeffing to feel any marked attachment to lady Madelina, or affecting forrow for her lofs, fhe had contemplated an object of mortality with the fympathetic thoughtfulnefs of one who felt confcious that fhe was a fellow-pilgrim, journeying

to the ſame bourne. A conviction of the inſtability of temporal poſſeſſions, and the inefficiency of human aid, would naturally direct a conſiderate mind to firmer ſupports, and to recur to the idea of a traveller, than which nothing can be more analagous to human life. The certainty of a limited reſidence amongſt the objects of ſenſe excited a ſtrong ſolicitude to extend her knowledge of things inviſible, and to ſecure an intereſt in that undiſcovered world of which ſhe muſt one day become an inhabitant.

A ſtate of mind like that which I have deſcribed appears at the firſt glance to be unfavourable to the deſigns of a Fitz-oſborne. He thought it otherwiſe. It was a diſpoſition which naturally led to the diſcuſſion of moral and religious truths. The decent forms which the cuſtom of the world ſtill ſanctions preſcribed

ſcribed to the Monteiths the neceſſity of avoiding promiſcuous viſitors, and abſenting from public amuſements. And though the fair Arabella ſeemed to caſt a longing look from her ſolitude upon forbidden pleaſure, the counteſs liſtened to the narrative of the day with a more languid attention, and imperceptibly led back the converſation to ſome improving ſubject. Her attempts generally frightened lady Arabella, and compelled her to take refuge in her own apartments; where ſhe found occupation in conſulting with her maid on the changes of ornament which the alterations in her mourning would admit. Lord Monteith, though at firſt doubtful how he ſhould kill time during this melancholy period of confinement, found ſo much amuſement in ringing the dumb-bell and learning to play on the violin, that he re-

 lapſed

lapſed into his old misfortune of want of leiſure; and Fitzoſborne would have found it more difficult to avoid than to ſelect opportunities for private converſation with Geraldine.

CHAP. XXVII.

—— In diſcourſe more ſweet—
Others apart ſat on a hill retir'd;
In thoughts more elevate, and reaſon'd high
Of Providence, fore-knowledge, will, and fate,
Fix'd fate, free will, fore-knowledge abſolute,
And found no end, in wandering mazes loſt.
Of good and evil much they argued, then,
Of happineſs and final miſery,
Paſſion and apathy, glory and ſhame,
Vain wiſdom all, and falſe philoſophy.

MILTON.

READING was one of lady Monteith's conſtant amuſements; and among her favourite writers the moral pages of Johnſon held a diſtinguiſhed pre-eminence. His inſtructive romance of Raſſelas occupied her one morning. She ſtopped at the part which ſeemed to intimate the author's belief in the poſſibility of ſpectral appearances. The idea ſtrongly engroſſed her imagination. She

ruminated on the arguments which might be adduced on either fide, and continued in a profound reverie when Fitzofborne entered the room.

After a paufe, in which lady Monteith was trying to difengage her ideas from the train of reflection which they had purfued, Edward politely expreffed his fears that he had interrupted an agreeable ftudy; and, with an intimation that he would immediately withdraw, inquired what fubject occupied her attention. She delivered to him the unclofed volume without any comment. He read the paffage to which her finger referred, and reftored it with an obfervation, that the Britifh cenfor was perfectly confiftent. Geraldine, miftaking this remark for approbation, replied, that fhe had ever thought him fo, and therefore ftrove to form her mind by the exalted ftandard his works prefcribed.

"I agree

"I agree with you," said Fitzosborne. "His writings do indeed prescribe an "exalted standard of morality. A gi-"gantic one, I should rather say, utterly "inadequate to the present state of the "world. His views and writings are, "however, all uniform. An enemy to "levity and simplicity, a lover of disci-"pline and system, averse to those rights "which man inherently possesses, tena-"cious of those bulwarks which society "forms, he is repulsive in his politics, "uncomplying in his morality, and "austere in his religion."

It was only the last observation which convinced the countess that this exordium was designed to censure her favourite author, and she began his defence by making some preliminary concessions. In extenuation of that air of discontent and depression which ever pervades his works when he refers to the

the ſituation of a profeſſed writer, ſhe maintained, that large allowances ought to be made for the ſenſibility of unpatronized merit, conſcious of deſert and ſtruggling under calamity. She added, that the ſituation of the moraliſt in his early years precluded him from entering into thoſe more refined claſſes of ſociety, whoſe amiable poliſh might have ſoftened the aſperities of his natural character. But ſince the world already poſſeſſed many elegant inſtructors, who knew how to aim the lighter ſhafts of ſatire, and to blend improvement with amuſement, perhaps the lover of literature would not regret the circumſtances that gave him one leſs urbane moraliſt, whoſe auſtere ſenſe exhibited the nobleſt model of energetic compoſition and exalted principle.

" Your juſtification, madam," ſaid Fitzoſborne, " is concluſive. The page

" of

"of Johnſon will ever be reſorted to by "the lover of variety, and will claim "the appropriate commendations which "you have given it, from minds capa- "ble of appreciating his real worth. "He is too profound to be the idol of "the million: and as his beauties can "only be reliſhed by an underſtanding "as vigorous as his own, ſo his precepts "ſeem calculated for diſpoſitions that "reſemble him in firmneſs. On ſuch "ſtrong minds his tendency to ſuper- "ſtition can produce no bad effects."

"My acquaintance is too limited," rejoined the counteſs, "for me to know "a perſon to whom I could not ſafely "recommend the works of Johnſon."

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Edward. "I ſhould have many objec- "tions to lady Arabella's ſeeing the "paſſage which has wrought your mind "into its preſent ſtate of *high* enthuſiaſm.

"The

"The uncommon susceptibility and "delicacy of her character would make "her feel painful alarms, while I see "you only indulge a 'fine frenzy.' In "a conversation you lately had with "her, even some of your guarded ex-"pressions have caused her the most "distressing agitation."

Lady Monteith recollected that she was talking to a lover, and determined to endure a little puerility. She acknowledged, that it was natural for Arabella to seem depressed immediately after the loss of a friend who had acted the part of a foster-mother to her, and she promised to be very cautious in future. "But," continued she, "I must "own, that the invisible agency of se-"parated spirits is a very favourite theme "with me; and though, contrary to "the opinion of the Abyssinian sage, I "could affirm, that we never have any "certain

"certain evidence that the dead are "permitted to become objects of our "senses, I have long rejoiced in the "hope, that our departed friends are "the agents employed by over-ruling "Providence to perform offices of care "and tenderness to their surviving con-"nexions. This thought has most fre-"quently occurred to me, as I have "bent over my sleeping children, and I "have fancied glorified beings watched "our unconscious hours with similar "attention. When I was once threat-"ened with the loss of my eldest darling, "I found sensible consolation in the idea "of its becoming a guardian cherub to "sustain the innocence of its sisters "through a dangerous world, and to "receive my parting spirit at the hour "of my dissolution."

While the countess spoke, her radiant eyes were suffused with tears. Fitzosborne,

borne, checking ſome unſubdued ſtruggles of conſcience, which almoſt tempted him to wiſh he could enjoy ſuch viſionary delights, coolly replied to her energetic ſpeech: " I ſhould be very ſorry, ma-
" dam, to interrupt thoſe agreeable re-
" veries which in minds of your tem-
" perature can *rarely* be prejudicial. I
" ſhall only ſtate the dangerous conſe-
" quences of ſuch illuſions becoming
" general. What a tremendous ſuper-
" ſtructure of impoſition might prieſt-
" craft erect upon ſuch a viſionary baſis!
" You do not pretend, madam, to ſay,
" that your hopes reſt upon any real
" foundation. The nature of the ſoul
" has hitherto eluded inquiry. It may
" in time become capable of abſolute
" definition; and though the age is not
" at preſent ſufficiently enlightened to
" afford abſolute proof of this ſuppoſed
" immaterial ſubſtance being only a
" more

" more exquiſite configuration of periſh-
" able atoms, incapable of diſtinct exiſt-
" ence, the glorious epocha of truth and
" reaſon is too near to allow us to believe
" the poſſibility of ſpectral appearances,
" or even of ſpiritual agency, in the
" manner your imagination prompts you
" to wiſh."

Though lady Monteith was no deep theologian, ſhe had heard of the millenium, and the ſuſpenſion of conſciouſneſs ~~in the diſembodied ſoul; and ſhe con-~~cluded that Fitzoſborne was a convert to thoſe doctrines. She was by no means aware of the deeper tendency of his views; yet, as ſhe thought there was ſomething peculiar in his opinions, ſhe wiſhed to fathom him upon theſe ſubjects. She knew enough of the world to be convinced, that divinity was not the favourite ſtudy of young men of faſhion; but ſhe knew too, that deep learning

learning was equally excluded from polite circles. Fitzoſborne had been announced to her as the "mirror of information;" and ſhe ſaw nothing ridiculous in the idea, that a man of reading ſhould devote a part of his attention to the ſtudy of the nobleſt truths. Indifference on ſerious ſubjects was, as far as her obſervations extended, combined with ignorance and a general relaxation of mind. Fitzoſborne's manner evinced energy and attention. She had often felt indignant at hearing the witling attempt to ridicule what he did not underſtand, or the libertine ſeek to invalidate what he feared to believe. But Fitzoſborne poſſeſſed too much real talent to envy the wreath that fades upon the coxcomb's brow, and his conduct ſeemed too correct to ſupply him with a motive for taking ſhelter in infidelity. His ſentiments on every ſubject were moral and liberal.

His

His ſelf-command was exemplary; his information general; his reaſoning, though flowery, ingenious, and, in lady Monteith's opinion, judicious. I have already obſerved, that her parts were rather brilliant than profound. It will not therefore be ſurpriſing, that ſhe ſhould be eaſily entangled in the ſnare of a ſyllogiſm, or that the unſuſpecting ſincerity of her heart ſhould render her a dupe to any one who took the trouble to play the ſpecious conſummate hypocrite.

In forming her opinion of the dangerous character which was now expoſed to her obſervation, ſhe had fallen into the ſame error of precipitate judgment which ſhe had been formerly guilty of in the caſe of lord Monteith. She now ſupplied talents with as much liberality as ſhe formerly created virtues. Experience had convinced her, that love is

apt

apt to look through magnifying optics; yet, though one pleaſing phantom faded after another, ſomething really eſtimable ſtill remained; and on her comparing her own lot with that of others, ſhe found abundant reaſon to acquieſce in a ſtate of reſigned content. Recalling ſome of Mrs. Evans's early precepts, ſhe had laboured to ſubdue thoſe more exquiſite refinements of ſenſibility, which vainly look for conſummate enjoyment in this world; and, without feeling too lively regrets for the want of unattainable good, ſhe enjoyed the cup of bleſſing which Providence tendered to her acceptance. She was in this ſtate of mind when her acquaintance with Fitzoſborne commenced. The peculiarity of his character drew her attention. The evident infelicity of his connubial proſpects attracted pity. His conduct awakened eſteem, and his intellectual ſuperiority excited

excited admiration. Neither did ſhe diſcover from what ſecret failing in herſelf that admiration ſprung, nor that Vanity is as great a magnifier as Love.

Fitzoſborne had been ſo careful to veil his ſcepticiſm in ambiguous phraſes, that lady Monteith's ſolicitude to diſcover his principles really aroſe from an idea that their ſingularity chiefly proceeded from their excellence, and that by converſing with him ſhe ſhould ſtrengthen her own convictions. She had often lamented, that lord Monteith's volatile temper deprived her of that ſupporting judgment and directing care which the conjugal inſtitution was intended to afford to the ſofter ſex. Though not doubtful of the propriety of her own conduct, ſhe naturally wiſhed it ſhould receive the approbation of an obſerving eye; and a conſciouſneſs of her own abilities was attended with ſome

repugnance

repugnance to their "wafting their fweetnefs in the defert air." The friend, the advifer fhe had long wifhed for, feemed now to prefent himfelf to her view in the perfon of an accomplifhed intelligent gentleman of irreproachable worth, who would foon become a near relation. Every idea of impropriety was removed by this latter confideration; and, with the ufual imbecility of fhort-fighted mortals, fhe fancied her character might acquire additional luftre by imbibing the fplendor of fo fair an archetype. She had not difcovered, that

All was falfe, and hollow; though his tongue
Dropp'd manna, and could make the worfe appear
The better reafon, to perplex and dafh
Matureft councils; for his thoughts were low;
To vice induftrious, but to nobler deeds
Tim'rous and flothful; yet he pleas'd the ear.

Her endeavours to diveft this "Demon of fentiment" of his cherubic veil were

were, however, ineffectual. Wrapped in his darling myſticiſm, he defied her ſcrutiny. His knowledge of the human heart convinced him how powerful an engine ſecreſy becomes when wielded by a ſkillful hand, and oppoſed to the reſtleſs ſpirit of female curioſity. But while he eluded her inquiries, and avoided a full diſcovery of his own opinions, he threw out enough to convince her, that they were not only extraordinary but permanent, and by complimenting the ſagacious avidity with which ſhe ſeized every ſentiment he ſeemed unwarily to diſcloſe, he rouſed the mingled ſolicitude of inquiſitiveneſs and vanity, and formed an intereſt which he determined to improve.

The converſation ended on his part with a panegyric on morality, which he loaded with oſtentatious ornaments; and a philippic againſt the illiberality of ſuppoſ-

ing that exalted minds needed any other inducement to act rightly than the abstract loveliness of virtue. His last observation was prefaced by a solemn avowal of his own respect for religion, which he acknowledged to be a most useful invention, and a necessary restriction upon the untutored part of mankind. He left lady Monteith in a sort of maze, regretting that he had not been more explicit on those points in which he had confessed his opinions differed from hers, delighted with his pure morality, and enchanted with his conversation.

Her reverie was interrupted by lady Arabella's requesting the favour of her opinion, whether tiffany, jessamine, or crape roses, would make the most elegant festoon. She listened with perplexed attention to a recapitulation of the light airiness of the former ornament, and the quiet accommodation of the latter;

latter; and ſhe felt mortified at being obliged to witneſs the effect of their alternate diſplay on her ladyſhip's court dreſs. While her eyes were fixed upon vacancy, and her thoughts were regretting the wilful negligence, which would give to Fitzoſborne a frivolous unintelligent partner, ſhe, with the indifference of Swift's Vaneſſa, pronounced an unconſcious preference of the crape roſes. This fiat was deciſive, and lady Arabella returned to her own apartment with her maid and her milliner; a happy groupe, till the diſcovery, that a lady whom lady Arabella hated wore crape roſes, drew from the diſtreſſed fair one ſeveral pathetic ejaculations on the peculiar unhappineſs of her own lot, in being thus prevented from having the pretticſt trimming in the world. Some tender tears were dropped, which were placed to the account of her aunt; and after a

ſew expreſſions, which from a perſon of leſs delicacy might be termed ſcolding, ſhe diſmiſſed her terrified auditors with a declaration, that ſhe was very low, and could not bear contradiction and diſappointment.

Meantime lady Monteith had reſumed her ſtudies, and began to diſcover ſome of thoſe faults in her beloved Johnſon which Fitzoſborne had pointed out, when lord Monteith entered the room, highly elated that he had juſt made himſelf complete maſter of "Britons ſtrike "home," and entreating her to accompany him upon the harp. She complied; but the ſmile of acquieſcence was more of the penſive than of the exhilarating kind; and her thoughts wandered to the prohibited haunts of uſeleſs regrets for the paſt, and vain anticipations of the future. But while, in her career of impoſſibilities, ſhe was begin-

ning

ning to wiſh that Monteith poſſeſſed the intelligent mind of Fitzoſborne, her careleſs hand ſtruck a falſe chord, and a mechanical impulſe rouſed her attention time enough to anſwer her lord's inquiries, if ſhe was well, and if any thing made her unhappy. His affectionate ſolicitude reſtored her mind to its uſual temperament, and ſhe chided herſelf for indulging a thought inconſiſtent with the gratitude and eſteem which ſhe owed to her plighted conſort. She recollected, that different excellencies belong to different characters; and that it is the abuſe, not the want, of a talent which ſtamps criminality upon any one. She made allowances for the force of habit conſpiring with ſtrong paſſions, unreſtrained by an expenſive, yet defective, education, and inflamed by the ſeductions of affluence and uncontrolled freedom of action. While theſe reflec-

tions ſucceſſively occupied her mind, a tender ſweetneſs diffuſed itſelf over her countenance, and her hand executed "Britons ſtrike home" entirely to his lordſhip's ſatisfaction.

CHAP. XXVII.

Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While peers and dukes, and all their ſweeping train,
And garters, ſtars, and coronets appear,
And in ſoft ſounds, "Your Grace" ſalutes the ear.
POPE.

FITZOSBORNE's thoughts were now ſo engroſſed by his intended attack on the principles and honour of lady Monteith, that he felt as little intereſted about the event of his engagements with lady Arabella as if the marriage ceremony had really taken place. He was rouſed from this inſenſibility by the noble viſcount his brother, who, having procured a copy of the redoubtable ſettlement, which I have before mentioned, ſwore upon his honour (his lordſhip, though very fond of this oath, was never known to be forſworn) that the terms were too hard

for any man above a ſhoe-black to abide by. " I would have you by all means, " Ned," ſaid he, " make a better bar-" gain for yourſelf. The girl is im-" menſely fond of you, that is evident, " and a fellow with a tenth part of " your addreſs would make the pretty " driveller accede to any thing. Can't " you give her a little ſentiment upon " the occaſion, and tell her, that by re-" ſerving all her fortune in her own " power, it will be abſolutely impoſſible " for her ever to enjoy the ſublime " gratification of receiving obligations " from the perſon ſhe loves? Can't you " flouriſh too upon the proviſion in caſe " of ſeparation and divorce, and declare " that the frigorific idea petrifies your " whole frame? Be maſter of her fortune, " however, at all events; for let me " tell you, my dear lad, a wife's affec-" tions in this age are but a transferable

" com-

"commodity of little permanent value, "I affure you."

Edward felt too well convinced of his influence to doubt the poffibility of his acquiring the glittering prize upon his own terms; and he fketched in his mind the only conditions upon which he would confent to give the lady the honour of his name. Thefe conditions were remarkable for nothing but their being a direct contradiction to lady Madelina's plan. But on his firft converfation with lady Arabella upon the fubject he difcovered, that he had greatly miftaken her character when he attributed to it any degree of pliability in pecuniary matters. She, indeed, loved to fquander with thoughtlefs profufion; but that very love of fquandering fuggefted the propriety of retaining the power of doing fo; and the lovers parted with great mutual diffatisfaction: Edward

convinced that his merits would confer honour upon any lady on whom he beſtowed his hand, and lady Arabella perſuaded that a younger brother has no right to expect a higher office than to be his wife's ſteward, if he be ſo lucky as to engage the good opinion of a woman of fortune. Both ſeemed inclined to bring their matrimonial pretenſions to a freſh market. He thought that his perſon might attract ſome fair one equally rich and leſs mercenary; and ſhe knew, that when people calculate upon good matches there is always as great a difference between preſent poſſeſſion and reverſionary expectation, as there is between the comparative ſplendor of a baronial and a ducal coronet. The gentleman pondered upon the propriety of diſcontinuing his addreſſes; but the lady haſtened his deliberations by informing him, that if his
viſits

visits at Portland-place were upon her account, she begged she might not in future interrupt his important avocations; and thus Mr. Fitzosborne was suddenly reduced to the situation of a *rejected* swain, a condition which the versatility of his talents knew how to improve.

Lady Arabella's frivolity, selfishness, and avowed expectation of making superior conquests, did not discredit the tale which Fitzosborne told of his dismission. The blunt integrity of lord Monteith's character took fire at his sister's evident dereliction of the principles of honour, constancy, and female delicacy; and the reluctance with which the specious Edward appeared to discover her caprice irritated his ardent temper still more. He charged her with base infidelity and gross indecorum; and she evaded the charge by urging,

 that

that ſhe was a free independent being, and accountable to no one for her actions, which were the reſult of her opinions; and no one had any right to ſcrutinize the opinions of others. The earl raved againſt this heterodox doctrine, becauſe it militated againſt his wiſh of ſupremacy, without diſcovering that there was a degree of ingratitude in the application of theſe principles againſt the intereſt of the maſter from whom ſhe had acquired them; and her ladyſhip reſolved never to miſlead her huſband by furniſhing a previous inſtance of her ſubmiſſion to her brother's authority. She removed on the very evening of the diſpute to the houſe of lord viſcount Fitzoſborne.

In order to explain the reaſon of her chooſing that aſylum, I muſt unriddle a little Machiavelian policy. The ſituation of the noble houſe of Fitzoſborne was

become

become ſo very precarious in point of credit, that the repreſentative of its honours, like Shakeſpeare's Percy, had long "caſt many a northern look to "ſee the Frazer bring up his powers." The illuſtrious viſcount indeed could not give himſelf a legal title to that ſpacious inheritance which now centered in lady Arabella; but his fraternal wiſh of tranſferring it to his own family was not quite diſintereſted. Edward had ever appeared too abſtracted, too generous, and too ſuperior to low mercenary views, to deny a brother the loan of a few thouſands, and his indifference to money was in the viſcount's opinion the cauſe of his preſent diſappointment; for had his whole heart been engroſſed by the deſire of advancing his fortune, the pretty bird might have beat her gay plumage in uſeleſs vexation, at finding herſelf

herſelf ſurrounded by too many toils ever to hope for recovered liberty.

In oppoſition to thoſe ſaturnine cenſors who affirm that a genteel pair never think or act in concert, I have to relate a ſcheme in which the viſcount and his lady cordially co-operated, and which, though it might not terminate in an invocation of Venus's antique doves, promiſed to produce a modern pigeon. The farce commenced with a viſit from the viſcounteſs to her dear friend; during which ſhe heard with mingled ſurprize and grief that Mr. Fitzoſborne's expectations were ſo very illiberal, and his temper ſo very uncomplying, that the connection was diſſolved. She commended the laudable ſpirit which dictated lady Arabella's reſolution of ſooner breaking her heart than ſubmitting to unjuſtifiable demands; but when ſhe

added,

added, that, by thus acting with proper regard to female dignity, ſhe had excited the reſentment of her brother, the indignation of her ſympathizing friend exceeded all bounds. With bitter ſarcaſms on the indelicacy of lord Monteith's interference, ſhe intreated her to remove directly to lord Fitzoſborne's, and aſſured her, that offended beauty would find a protector in the viſcount, who would either compel Edward to make proper conceſſions, or diſown him for a brother. There was ſomething truly *Roman* in this ſentiment. It was expreſſed with becoming dignity; and the viſcounteſs, ſtill farther to enforce it, added, "You will get a little more "into the world, my dear, from which, "it is certain, you have lately been too "much ſecluded. We have frequently "little private parties, at which you "cannot object to taking a card, for "nobody

"nobody will know any thing about it, "ſo that there cannot be any indeco-"rum. I proteſt, I think you grow "more bewitching every hour. Your "mourning becomes you ſo exquiſitely, "that in pity to the world I ought to "propoſe keeping you ſhut up, that "other belles may have a little chance; "but I own I am malicious enough to "wiſh to give a little fillip to Edward's "fears. Nothing is ſo animating as a "ſtrong fit of jealouſy, and I know that "to make freſh conqueſts you need "only appear." So friendſhip urged; and its arguments were concluſive.

The parties might now be ſaid to be fairly drawn up in battle array; for, not to yield to the Fitzoſbornes in hoſpitality, lord Monteith had inſiſted that Edward ſhould become his gueſt; and, though their taſte and diſpoſitions were by no means in uniſon, he fancied himſelf highly

highly gratified with the companion he had ſelected; and he was much too warm an advocate for what he eſteemed an injured character to permit the counteſs to continue neutral. Fitz-oſborne's affected dejection ſoon intereſted her feeling heart; and, though ſhe could ſcarcely conſider the loſs of an Arabella to be a misfortune, ſhe felt that great allowance ſhould be made for the force of diſappointment upon a mind ſo ſtrongly ſuſceptible. Still incredulous as to the reality of his attachment, ſhe was inclined to believe, that after he had acceded to the propoſals of his friends, a ſenſe of honour and the force of habit had produced in his refined diſpoſition a recurrence of the ſame images, which might be almoſt ſuppoſed equivalent to preference. The void which female caprice had left in his imagination muſt be at preſent painful, and, though

though an enlightened underſtanding would ſoon occupy the chaſm with a more brilliant ſet of ideas, delicate ſenſibility might be allowed to ſtart at the illiberal ridicule which a cenſorious world is ever ready to beſtow on a jilted ſwain or a forſaken damſel. Beſide, without being mercenary, might not a prudent man regret the loſs of a ſplendid eſtabliſhment? To ſoften that regret ſhe exerted all the brilliant powers of her mind, and all the faſcinating graces of her numerous accompliſhments. Charmed out of his pretended melancholy, Fitzoſborne ſeemed to beſtow a liſtleſs attention, varying the contour of his expreſſions as the ſtyle of her attractions required: Sometimes terminating his ſilent adulation by exclaiming, "Happy Monteith!" At another expatiating in praiſe of friendſhip; or, if he aimed at making the

moſt

moſt forcible impreſſion, he only interrupted the vivacity of her tones by the frequency of his ſighs. But in either inſtance he was equally careful that lord Monteith ſhould hear both the exclamations and the ſighs.

Diſappointed by perceiving that his dejection did not yield to time, and more than ever convinced that love could not have made ſuch an incurable wound, the counteſs began to ſuſpect that this diſorder was conſtitutional, and ſhe propoſed his applying to ſociety and change of ſcene, the uſual recipe for a melancholic humour. His conſtant rejection of invitations induced her to pique his pride. "Do you know," ſaid ſhe, "that lady Arabella flouriſhes "in the firſt circles, and is become ſo "very irreſiſtible, that not only wits "and beaus write madrigals to her, but

"a cer-

" a certain young duke of our acquaint-
" ance is thought to be ſeriouſly en-
" tangled? They are to be at the opera
" together to-night in his grace's box.
" Now I intend to go, and take you for
" my *cecisbeo*. What ſay you to my
" ſcheme? It will be generous to ſhew
" the young adventurer how Armida
" metamorphoſes her knights before
" he is irrecoverably enchanted."

" I am very willing to exhibit my
" woe-begone face, if the publication
" of it will afford you any amuſement,"
returned Fitzoſborne. " The duke
" and I ſhall not exchange any angry
" glances, and I honour lady Arabella's
" ſincerity too much to feel any reſent-
" ment at her conduct. She has only
" exerciſed the indubitable right of
" every human being. Her heart has
" changed its poſſeſſor, and ſhe has
" obeyed its dictates."

" Does

" Does not your candour grant rather " too great a latitude here ?" inquired the countefs.

" Confidering the prejudices of the " times, I certainly do. But is there " not a great degree of cruelty in re- " quiring conftancy from thofe minds " that have not fufficient fortitude to be " really immutable ? And after all, as " we can only affume the appearance of " it, is it not alfo unjuft, and wicked " too, as we create a neceffity for hypo- " crify ? To difeafes in different confti- " tutions we prefcribe different reme- " dies ; but the diforders of the mind " muft all be cured by one univerfal " panacea. Surely it is only the tyranny " of cuftom that prevents us from adapt- " ing our moral code to every character, " inftead of ftretching diffimilar minds " on the gigantic iron couch defigned " for a Procruftes."

Lady Monteith felt ſtartled. She recollected that where much was given much would be required; yet this text related to diſſimilar powers of doing good, and could not poſſibly be urged in extenuation of any vicious action. But Fitzoſborne interrupted her muſings by aſſuming a gayer air than he had lately exhibited. "I ſee," ſaid he, "I ſhall have ſome difficulty to "reconcile you to *all* my opinions; "But, no matter; when I legiſlate for "the world, don't flatter yourſelf, that "I ſhall propoſe a lax ſyſtem to you. "I know how to eſtimate your mental "ability, and *your* code ſhall be rigorous "and coercive."

"Dare you repeat this ſpeech to-"night at the opera in the hearing of "lady Arabella?" ſaid the counteſs.

"There requires no courage to re-"peat an undiſputed truth in the hear-

" ing of the whole world." Lady Monteith forgot her diſapprobation of the novelty, ſingularity, and laxity of Fitzoſborne's opinions; and as ſhe drove to form her party for the evening, ſhe only remembered his happy talent at a compliment.

CHAP. XXVIII.

It is Jealousy's peculiar nature
To swell small things to great; nay out of nothing
To conjure much.

YOUNG.

THE polite world were so engrossed by engagements, that lady Monteith found it impossible to form a party to her satisfaction. Exclusive of the pale votaries, who sacrifice peace, health, fortune, and honour at the shrine of Pharo, several were engaged to the Quizzes, and more to the Cabinet of Monkies, which was just opened. The fair countess could scarcely get any body into her party but those who were left out of all others: and they who refused her secretly laughed at the rusticity of supposing

poſing any body, who lived in the world, could defer till two o'clock the important buſineſs of fixing the evening occupation. She was forced to be contented with an antiquated belle of the laſt age, and a would-be fine lady of the preſent, to whom ſhe was lucky enough to add a beau, ſir Hargrave Nappy, a gentleman, who though known by every body to be incurably deaf, had long laboured under the tantalizing deſire of wiſhing to be thought a connoiſſeur in muſic. With this deſign he conſtantly attended the opera, where his unvarying countenance and fixed poſture procured him the appellation of the pillar of melody.

Surrounded by the groupe I have deſcribed, and eſcorted by the gallant Edward Fitzoſborne, lady Monteith entered a ſide-box oppoſite to that which was occupied by lady Arabella's

 party.

party. Had Geraldine intended to have felected foils for her own perfon, the females in her train were moft happily gifted by nature for that purpofe; and in point of celebrity they were juft enough known to make it difficult for any lady to decline being their companion. Repeated mortifications had taught them the arcana of high life; and the protection of a countefs was fufficiently flattering to confine them to that humble part which, they fuppofed her ladyfhip intended they fhould fuftain. Claiming fir Hargrave for their fhare of the beaus, they invited him to feat himfelf between them, and they addreffed all their obfervations to him, without once turning their heads to liften to the converfation which paffed behind them. But fir Hargrave was fo abforbed in opera ecftacies, that unlefs his eye happened to inform him that he was peculiarly

peculiarly addreſſed, all the *ſmart things* paſſed utterly unnoticed. Indeed the only honour that they ever received was a half bend, after which the amateur reſumed his former erect poſition, and with one hand in his boſom, and the other (on which was a fine antique) beating time on the front of the box, he repeated, like Shakeſpeare's Lorenzo, "Mark the muſic."

It is a very great pity that theſe unfortunate *ſmart things* ſhould be wholly loſt. The preſcient muſe at leaſt muſt be ſuppoſed to have heard them; but I feel ſo anxious to return to the reſt of the party, that I muſt defer the recapitulation of them to ſome other opportunity, promiſing, if poſſible, either to interweave them with the hiſtory of my travels, or, if I have no other means of introduction, to give them to the world

in the form of "More laſt words of Mrs. Prudentia."

The blooming Geraldine never appeared ſo enchanting. She perceived, with a degree of pleaſure, in which ſhe did not ſuſpect any criminality, that the adventures of her box proved infinitely more intereſting to lady Arabella, than the devoirs of the noble duke whom ſhe wiſhed to exhibit as her captive. Fitzoſborne was in excellent ſpirits. The counteſs enjoyed the circumſtance. She thought he had been extremely ill uſed, and ſhe applauded the ſpirit which could return inſult with contempt. His attentions to herſelf, conſidered in this point of view, gave her ſincere ſatiſfaction. She returned them. Her natural vivacity, combining with accidental circumſtances, hurried her into a degree of mirth, which, to thoſe who were unacquainted with its motives, ap-

peared to border upon coquetry, more than the innocence of her heart and the rectitude of her principles would have permitted.

But while the lamb, basking in the blaze of noon, bounds over the flowery hillock, the wolf watches its haunts and meditates its destruction. To exemplify my pastoral simile: Fitzosborne saw with diabolical exultation, that Geraldine's behaviour had attracted general attention. He doubted not but calumny would be ready to frame some malignant whisper, and he understood the maxim which teaches that "virtue rarely survives the loss of reputation." Though he conceived that the powers of his own invention were fully equal to overthrow any defence which lady Monteith might make, he did not disdain adventitious aid. His watchful eye, though seemingly only fixed on the lovely form

which was feated by him, had difcovered lord Monteith in the pit. He perceived too that he was attentive to his lady's behaviour, and he fancied he read difpleafure in his countenance. "Can "this thoughtlefs animal," faid Fitzofborne to himfelf, "have any thing "like jealoufy in his compofition? He "feems lefs carelefs than ufual. If fo, "it is indeed above my hopes."

While he ruminated on this idea, the door of the box opened, and a young man of fafhion ftepped in. He was an intimate friend of lord Monteith's; and, feeing the countefs in what he thought a new point of view, he was defirous of fharing the pleafure which her converfation afforded. This did not increafe the gaiety of the party. The appearance of a ftranger caufed a temporary interruption. Geraldine recollected her thoughts, and her natural delicacy

delicacy ſeemed to ſhrink from an intruſion which, though ſanctioned by the freedom of our preſent ſyſtem of manners, ſeemed inconſiſtent with ſtrict politeneſs. His ſtyle of addreſs too was bold and familiar, very different from the inſinuating ſenſibility of Fitzoſborne, who, though conſcious of diſtinction, never appeared to preſume upon favour. She determined to mark her approbation of his behaviour by her own conduct, and, inſtead of the confidence and vivacity which marked her deportment previous to the entrance of her new gueſt, ſhe became as cold and circumſcribed in her anſwers as the rules of civility could poſſible admit.

Lord Monteith now entered the box; and, as he never concealed any ſentiment, the diſpleaſure he felt was ſtrongly marked in his countenance. He had

heard his lady pointed out as uncommonly beautiful by a ſtranger who ſat next him; and though he was very well pleaſed with that plaudit, the ſubſequent obſervations were not ſatisfactory. To the words, "Charming creature!" were added, "and ſo gay, ſo lively too "in her manners! what a happy man "that gentleman muſt be!" The ſtranger was juſt arrived from the country, and unwittingly ſuppoſed that a married pair would not forfeit their claims to celebrity by appearing at the ſame entertainment in the ſame party. Every exclamation which he uttered in compliment of the affectionate attention of this peerleſs couple increaſed the earl's reſtleſſneſs; and, no longer able to conceal his own right to the charmer who thus faſcinated all eyes, he ſuddenly roſe and joined her. He had ſeen nothing in her manner which

which cuſtom did not juſtify, and Fitz-oſborne was of all others the friend in whom he could moſt confide. Yet, without knowing what to blame, he thought the laws of cuſtom required reviſal.

Geraldine had not that ſpecies of fortitude which ſees diſpleaſure on a huſband's brow without any ſentiment but exultation. She was ignorant of thoſe principles which teach the diſſipated wife who has long renounced the power of pleaſing to exult in the capacity of giving pain. The light heart which had prompted the gay repartee became loaded with ſudden depreſſion, and the frolic ſmile vaniſhed with the unaffected vivacity which had given it birth.

The world had much to ſay on the adventures of this evening. Poor Arabella! every body was very ſorry for her. Lady Monteith had certainly

 ſpirited

ſpirited away her lover. Her exultation upon the occaſion was rather too marked for a woman of prodigious decorum; and really, if ſhe did continue to flirt it ſo notoriouſly in public, ſhe muſt renounce her pretenſions to ſuch *very* ſtrict propriety, and conſent to be thought no better than other people.

At coming out of the opera Fitzoſborne tapped lord Monteith upon the ſhoulder, and aſked him, how he diſpoſed of himſelf for the evening. "At home, if you have nothing better "to propoſe:" was the anſwer. "There "is a ſpirited ſet juſt gone to Brookes's," continued Fitzoſborne; "ſuppoſe we "follow them to obſerve manners and "characters." His lordſhip had no objection.

Early in lord Monteith's life his name was unfortunately familiar to the frequenters

frequenters of the gaming-table and the heroes of the turf. His attachment to the lovely Geraldine lessened that dangerous propensity; and, though she had failed in her endeavours to inspire a love of elegant pleasures, indifference for his former pursuits had gradually increased to disgust: the less pernicious sports of the field, and a boyish turn of amusement, succeeding in occupying a mind too volatile to seek pleasure out of its own resources. But since his lordship's disgust and forbearance arose more from the absence of temptation than from any fixed principle, the sight of the card table and the rattle of the dice-box excited passions which increased the unsubdued emotion that he had felt at the opera.

He proposed to Fitzosborne to form a party. Edward pleaded a total want of skill; protested, that he had a fixed

abhorrence of the gaming-table; and declared, that he never viſited thoſe ſcenes, except to ſtudy the human character, and to moralize on the fatal effects of the impetuous paſſion of avarice. His reflections were ſoon finiſhed that evening, for in a little time he profeſſed himſelf wearied with the ſcene, and he propoſed to lord Monteith that they ſhould retire to a private room. There too he felt the moments drag heavily, and it was mutually agreed to enliven them by a friendly game at picquet.

The ſtake firſt propoſed was trifling. Monteith was unſucceſsful. He tranſferred his latent reſentment to the cards, which he ſtamped under his foot; called for a new pack, and inſiſted upon doubling the ſum they played for. The events of the evening put ſeveral hundreds into Fitzoſborne's pocket; and his ſucceſs might ſtill have been greater, but

but neither his friendſhip nor his honour would (he proteſted) permit him to urge his good fortune any further. "Your temper," ſaid he, "is too "warm; and I hope the little vexations "of this evening will convince you of "the neceſſity of ſelf-control, or at leaſt "prevent you from trying your chance "with thoſe who might take the un-"generous advantage of your agitation, "which I ſcorn to uſe."

"I value not money," ſaid Monteith angrily; "nor can the curſed cards agi-"tate me. A truce with your morality "therefore, Edward; when I want a "monitor, it is time enough for you to "inveſt yourſelf with that dignity."

"I am not in a reſentful humour," returned Fitzoſborne ſmiling. "I ſhall "therefore very gladly reſign my dig-"nity, as you term it. Indeed, I have "been a little unlucky in the exerciſe

"of

"of it this evening. Yet if my well-"meant admonitions are but remem-"bered by my friends, the difintereft-"ednefs of my attachment will enable "me to fupport a little tranfient acri-"mony."

"Where elfe did you play the lec-"turer?" inquired Monteith, carelefsly.

"Where I faw a little impropriety," replied Fitzofborne, with fuppreffed fignificance.

"And did you fucceed no better "than you have done with me?" continued the earl, with increafing anxiety.

"I don't know. The character I "had to deal with was more *guarded* "than you are."

"What caufed your reproof?" faid his lordfhip, with affected eafe, and apparently occupied in forting the cards into three divifions.

"I be-

" I believe nothing but the too great " nicety of my own feelings; for on re- " viewing the affair I cannot fee any " thing effentially wrong; and I begin " to think thofe rules which impofe " fuperior caution on perfons who are " objects of public admiration unnecef- " farily fevere."

" The fentiments of ladies," refumed Monteith, " are generally more delicate " in thefe points than thofe of men. " Suppofe you make Geraldine your " cafuift in this bufinefs: She will tell " you if you went too far in your ad- " monitions."

" By no means," faid Fitzofborne, fnatching the cards. " Come, enough " of one fubject. Shall we have an- " other game?"

" No! I am tired; and as I love to " have every doubtful bufinefs cleared " up, we will go home to fupper, and

" I will

" I will mention your uneaſineſs to lady " Monteith, that you may ſleep with a " diſburdened conſcience."

Fitzoſborne ſtarted. " How came " *you* to diſcover, that the haſty opi- " nion which I injudiciouſly uttered, " really diſpleaſed her? Let me con- " jure you, my lord, by all our friend- " ſhip, endeavour to reſtore me to her " favour, and be convinced that I can " only have forfeited it through inad- " vertence."

Lord Monteith ſmiled with the con- ſcious ſuperiority which attends a ſuc- ceſsful feint, and aſſured the alarmed Fitzoſborne, that, if he would candidly acknowledge the nature of his offence, he might depend upon his interpoſition.

" It really," returned Edward, " was " nothing of conſequence. You have " of[illegible] charged me with poſſeſſing a " [illegible]cal ſternneſs, and I confeſs ſome

" of

" of my notions are auſtere. The " counteſs was in very lively ſpirits " this evening."

" Was ſhe?" ſaid Monteith, biting his lips.

" I ſaid ſomething to her, I forget " what, reſpecting the eaſe with which " Britiſh matrons publicly permit the " advances of notorious libertines. I " beg your pardon, Monteith, I know " he is your friend; but I muſt own, I " repeated this with more energy when " ſir Richard Vernon came into the " box. You know his notions are " avowedly licentious."

" It was very friendly of you," exclaimed his lordſhip, with a voice convulſed with paſſion. " Did he talk to " lady Monteith in an improper ſtyle?"

" By no means. Yet there was ſome-" what freer in his addreſs than I ſhould " have approved had the lady been my

" wife;

" wife; and I felt for my abſent friend. " The blaze of your Geraldine's charms, " my lord, is loſt upon me. Beauty " can never more affect my heart. But " I too well recollect the emotions it " has cauſed not to wiſh ſir Richard to " avoid lady Monteith, at leaſt if he " reſpects his own tranquillity."

" And could Geraldine reſent your " friendly obſervation?" interrupted Monteith.

" She only anſwered, that I was grown " ſplenetic, for public places ſanctioned " theſe intruſions. I however obſerved, " that ſhe did not ſpeak to me any more " during the whole evening."

" I deteſt caprice. She ſhall ac- " knowledge the friendlineſs of your " motive."

" Oh! for heaven's ſake! do not in- " terfere in that ſtyle. You will alarm " her pride, and ſink me for ever in her " opinion.

" opinion. Befide, you will utterly pre-
" vent any future effort on my part
" gently to reftrain thofe very agreeable
" fpirits which may be liable to mifcon-
" ftruction. To own the truth, I thought
" to-night fhe attracted particular atten-
" tion."

" Her prudence," exclaimed the earl, who, though he had imbibed the poifon of infinuation, was yet offended by a direct attack, " is as exemplary as her " character is fpotlefs."

" True," replied Fitzofborne, " but " think of the malignity of the " world."

" Who dares to impeach her con-" duct?" continued her lord, with increafed violence.

" What does not envy and calumny " dare?" cried the fentimental torturer. " But I fee my friendfhip is troublefome. " However, Monteith, recollect, that

" you

" you artfully wound the fecret out of " me, and therefore have no right to be " difpleafed at the difclofure."

" Your hand, Edward. Excufe my " warmth. My wife is too dear to me, " to allow me to hear the leaft cenfure " caft upon her behaviour with indif- " ference. I venerate the excellence of " your heart, and I love your franknefs. " I am frank myfelf, though I own I " did ufe a little circumlocution to dif- " cover what you certainly never in- " tended me to know. I was too fubtle " there. Was I not? But come, think " no more of it. Perhaps lady Mon- " teith might be a little wrong; but I " know you both meant well, and fhe " will readily forgive you."

" Then, as a pledge of your renewed " efteem, let me entreat you never to " mention this affair to her. I may " have been too fufceptible, and have

" miftaken

"mistaken her silence for resentment; "for I am convinced I misconstrued "her preceding behaviour."

Monteith pledged his honour for secresy, and endeavoured to dissipate his chagrin by humming an air. But the idea that Fitzosborne had seen something wrong in Geraldine, and his recollection of the stranger's conversation, sunk deep into his mind, and clouded the gay vacuity of his thoughts with spectres fearful as "the green-eyed monster" which haunted the frank and noble Moor, who, like lord Monteith, "thought men honest who but seemed to be so."

CHAP. XXIX.

No might nor greatneſs in mortality
Can Cenſure 'ſcape; back-wounding Calumny
The whiteſt virtue ſtrikes.

SHAKESPEARE.

VICE always appears to be moſt alluring when its machinations are crowned with ſucceſs. During the dangerous period of youth, while the paſſions are warm, the imagination lively, and the judgment weak, the ſpectator feels a bias in favour of that adventurer whoſe courſe (marked by ingenuity) leads to a ſpeedy attainment of his deſires. But could Inexperience reflect, and Impetuoſity pauſe, the couch of even the moſt proſperous villain would preſent no alluring ſpectacle. Fitzoſborne's plans had hitherto anſwered his wiſhes. His ſpecious

manners

manners had acquired the efteem of the countefs, and the unbounded confidence of her lord. He had obtained a firm footing in the family; had fown the baleful germ of fufpicion, fo fatal to domeftic peace; and the difpleafure and gloom which occafionally pervaded lord Monteith's countenance convinced him that it had taken root. Calumny was prepared to doubt the ftability of Geraldine's honour; and Calumny, like a peftilential blaft, can taint the innocence it affails. To thefe engines of feduction might be added the fophiftical principles of falfe philofophy, which, though cautioufly adminiftered and often rejected, ftill, like the delved mine, poffefs a power capable of fubverting the firmeft moral virtue, if not founded on the rock of religion.

Yet Fitzofborne was wretched. The atrocity of his defigns haunted his pillow, not

not with a ſenſe of remorſe, but with the apprehenſion of danger. The ſituation of the lady was exalted; her character was exemplary; her connexions were reſpectable; her huſband, as he had lately diſcovered, was not only tenacious of her reputation, and vain of her attractions, but alſo conſcious of her merits, and ſincerely attached to her perſon. Though the earl's apprehenſion was peculiarly ſlow, his paſſions were as remarkably vehement; and his ſkill at the various offenſive weapons was ſo great, that his opponent could have very little chance of eſcaping with life, if called to make the *amende honorable.* Fitzoſborne's fortunes were almoſt deſperate. Worldly prudence ſeemed, therefore, to point out the neceſſity of applying his ingenuity in deviſing ſome plan of improving his circumſtances, inſtead of waſting his talents in a purſuit

which

which only promifed danger, or, to fpeak according to his ideas, " barren honour."

Notwithftanding the appearance of open hoftility, he held a private correfpondence with the vifcount's family; and his intelligence from thence confirmed his own opinion, that the breach with lady Arabella was not totally irreparable. Her vexation at his attention to lady Monteith was too lively to be concealed, and too fincere to yield to the hopes which the noble duke's increafing admiration infpired. In vain did fhe recollect detecting him incognito at the theatre, looking at her through his opera-glafs. In vain did fhe remember her more fplendid triumph, when he prefented her with a ticket for lady Fillagree's fancied ball, infcribed " To the faireft." Fitzofborne faw his affiduities without emotion. The noble

duke's ſentiments were known to be inauſpicious to marriage; and no lady, who had not abſolutely determined to be a ducheſs, could even affect to find ſatisfaction in his converſation.

Fitzoſborne poized the chance of lucrative advantage with preciſion; and, as he had no inclination for ſleeping in the bed of honour, he beſtowed ſome forethought on the hazards he ran by purſuing his illicit deſigns againſt the lovely counteſs. Since he deemed his ſucceſs certain, it was unneceſſary to examine the effect of a diſappointment. Great prudence, great caution, and great morality, might prevent a *rencontre*. He might be unwilling to lift his arm againſt the life of his friend; he might reſpect the laws of his country; or his health might impoſe the neceſſity of a tour for its reſtoration. The laſt ſtep would be the moſt convenient, in caſe

lord

lord Monteith applied for legal damages, ſince, however large the ſum given by the verdict, abſence and incapacity would be a receipt in full. The next ſtep of the injured huſband muſt be a divorce, and the deſerted lady could not then object to taking refuge in a ſecond marriage, which was the only chance of reſtoring her again to the world, if not with untainted, at leaſt with a convaleſcent character. Geraldine was an heireſs, and it was to be ſuppoſed that her ſettlements were made with proper precaution. Even as a wife ſhe was infinitely more deſirable than Arabella; and, though the illiberality of huſbands might wiſh to ſecure their domeſtic poſſeſſions by an impaſſable incloſure, modern ſpirit had proved itſelf able to ſurmount every fence; and the lady might give away herſelf and her property ſeveral times over, without calling upon

death to cancel a former bond. The world indeed would at firſt be angry; but the times were very liberal. People would allow for the force of *irreſiſtible* temptation. They would plead, that it was impoſſible to forbear adoring ſuch a charming creature. The blame would be happily transferred to my lord, who ought never to have admitted a friend into his family, or to have truſted her out of his ſight; and in a little time every body would viſit Mr. Fitzoſborne and his lady, and perhaps even find them out to be a very worthy and exemplary pair.

Confirmed in his deſigns not more by his own inſidious inclinations than by the falſe notions which prevail even amongſt the more principled part of that important circle called the great world, Fitzoſborne proſecuted his nefarious plans; and he determined, that if

fear,

ſear, or as he called it prudence, did not check, compunction ſhould not diſſuade. Chance, and the credulous confidence of lord Monteith, favoured his wiſhes. Cards of invitation to lady Fillagree's *petit ſoupé* had been ſent to the Monteiths, and the counteſs had not only choſen her character, but ſhe had alſo decorated an Italian tiffany with feſtoons of violets, in which dreſs ſhe intended to perſonify the Perdita of Shakeſpeare. Her anxious entreaties had prevailed upon her lord to accompany her in the habit of the royal Florizel; and this mark of attachment on her part, and condeſcenſion on his, promiſed the renewal of domeſtic harmony. The expected evening approached, when a note from the miniſter requeſted lord Monteith's attendance in the houſe of peers. Buſineſs of great importance was to be agitated;

 a vio-

a violent oppofition was expected; and the honour of his lordfhip's fupport would confer a lafting obligation. The earl was not in the habit of courting minifterial favour; he difliked the tafk of attendance; and the labour of liftening to a long debate was always fufficiently terrific to make him prejudge the queftion. Yet though no one ever took lefs pains to acquire real authority, he was very well pleafed to be thought a man of confequence; and the minifter's requeft was too preffing to be declined. Geraldine wifhed to give up her engagement; but my lord had fixed upon a plan that would fettle every thing, and to which his own diflike of mafked balls and fancy fuppers gave a determinate ftability. It was, that Fitzofborne, inftead of fpending the evening alone in the library fhould be her efcort. My lord's drefs would fit him pretty exactly,

and

and Edward's excuſes anſwered the end for which they were deſigned, which was to fix my lord moſt poſitively in his determinations.

The entertainment was to be given at a villa a little diſtance from town. Geraldine dreſſed early; but her heavy heart ſeemed to anticipate ſome diſaſtrous iſſue. My lord came into her dreſſing-room to ſee if ſhe looked her character; and while he contemplated the ſimplicity and exquiſite adaption of her ornaments, the apprehenſions with which he had been lately tortured returned. "Do "not," ſaid he, "dance with Vernon, "nor any of that ſet, if they ſhould aſk "you. Plead that you are engaged to "Fitzoſborne, or elſe ſay that you are "tired."

"Will not that have a "ſingular "appearance?" inquired the counteſs.

 "You

"You have a ſtrange apprehenſive-
"neſs of ſingularity, Geraldine. Don't
"you remember your father's words,
"that there is no ſhame in being the
"only perſon who acts as ſhe ought to
"do?"

"Suppoſe then," ſaid her ladyſhip,
"I do not dance at all."

"What! when all the world knows
"that you are very fond of dancing? Is
"that the way to avoid ſingularity?
"And why this averſion to my friend?
"Cannot you forgive him for offering
"you ſome advice which you was too
"careleſs to attend to?"

"My dear lord, there has been ſome
"little miſunderſtanding, certainly. I
"am far from having any averſion to
"Fitzoſborne, and as far from being
"offended at his giving me any advice.
"I do not even recollect the circum-
"ſtance."

"O! you

"O! you give it that turn, do you? "But you understand my present pro- "hibition, I suppose, and you will re- "member it."

"Undoubtedly. And do you re- "collect, that depending upon your ac- "companying me, I have not formed "any party. If possible come away "from the house, and join me at Rich- "mond."

"You are grown a coward, Geraldine. "However I will come, if I can; but "Fitzosborne is surely a sufficient guard. "Tell Arabella to do that worthy fel- "low justice, or I shall disown her for "my sister."

The vivacity of lady Monteith had received so severe a check that she could not recover her spirits during her ride to lady Fillagree's. Fitzosborne discovered her dejection. "I know," said he, "such solicitude is often very

"troubleſome; yet the fervency of my "friendſhip will not permit me to ſee "you diſpirited without inquiring into "the cauſe of your depreſſion."

"It is ſo wholly feminine," returned ſhe, "that it is abſolutely undefinable, "and muſt be ſet down in the catalogue "of my unaccountables, unleſs I ſhould "give as a reaſon, what I am very un-"willing to admit; I mean, an idea of "my lord's, that ſome time or another "I did not treat your good advice with "ſufficient deference. Pray, Fitzoſborne, "when did you play the moraliſt; and "when was I ſuch a refractory pupil?"

"Ah Monteith! this is one of thy "miſconceptions. I will explain the "whole affair, madam, though it is too "ridiculous to merit repetition. You "recollect the night we were together "at the opera."

"Perfectly."

"And

" And that in return to ſome obſerva-
" tions which I made on the behaviour
" of lady Arabella, you ſaid, diſappoint-
" ment had made me ſplenetic?"

" I do."

" Lord Monteith heard your anſwer
" as he entered the box; and he will
" perſiſt in his opinion, that my ex-
" preſſions were pointed at you, as a
" reproof for ſomething in your manner
" to Vernon. I muſt excuſe him by
" ſaying, that he was a little fluſtered.
" I followed him to Brookes's, where
" we ſoon adjuſted ——"

" To Brookes's! Does my lord fre-
" quent Brookes's?"

" O you tempter! No; I have too
" much honour to reveal ſecrets. The
" affair was ſoon explained, I was going
" to ſay;—for Monteith really has a very
" good heart, which excuſes a little ac-
" cidental puzzle-patedneſs."

Geraldine coloured; but her Proteus companion gave her no time to refent. Looking out of the chariot window, he relapfed into fentiment. " See, dear " lady Monteith," faid he, " how the " giddy throng haften to this feftival of " oftentatious vanity. A reflecting " mind, on contemplating this croud " of carriages, muft feel other fenfations " than thofe of pleafure. Not to men- " tion the fufferings of thofe noble ani- " mals who draw the vehicles of tyrant " man, the fituation of mafter and fer- " vant, as exhibited upon the prefent " occafion, is enough to cure the moft " obdurate heart of its partiality for " thofe diftinctions of rank which cor- " rupt fociety now exhibits. How re- " pugnant to the feelings of univerfal " love is that pale emaciated footman, " who, expofed to the inclemency of " the feafons, fufpends the flambeau

" over

" over the carriage of his voluptuous " maſter!' How remote muſt that man " ſtill be from the ultimate perfection of " his nature, who can enjoy the pleaſures " of a crowded aſſembly, while his " coachman quakes in the warping " wind, or ſhrinks beneath the pelting " ſtorm! It is the cruelty of a Mezen-" tius: The living body is united to " putridity."

" There is ſome juſtice in your ob-" ſervations," ſaid the counteſs; " and " it behoves us as *individuals* to leſſen " the evils of that inequality which " public good requires." The carriages now ſtopped; and as Fitzoſborne led her to the gay aſſemblage of beauty, fancy, and elegance, her reflections on his character concluded with an obſervation, that " his very failings leaned to the ſide of virtue."

The

The ball went on very much like other balls. Sir Richard Vernon and ſeveral gentlemen of his caſt of character were preſent, and Geraldine complied punctually with her lord's injunction, either to ſit down, or to dance with Fitzoſborne. She had forgot to account for his appearing in a dreſs ſo correſpondent to her own; and when ſome ladies, by pointing it out, alarmed her ſenſe of propriety, her explanation was embarraſſed, and conſequently ſuſpicious. As at the opera, Fitzoſborne's attentions were confined to her; and his elegant addreſs and polite vivacity added the ſneer of envy to the whiſper of detraction. Lady Arabella had indeed the honour to move down one dance with the duke; but his grace was ſo fatigued by the exertion, that he was obliged to renounce dancing, and to have

have recourſe to Caſſino for the reſt of the evening. Her ſucceeding partners ranked no higher than commoners, without poſſeſſing any of the innate diſtinctions which gave celebrity to the partner of Fitzoſborne. He had only bowed to her in the moſt diſtant manner poſſible. Her ſmile of invitation was unanſwered; and ſhe began to think a fainting ſit was the only chance of rouſing the monſter's attention. She performed it in the greateſt perfection; but on opening her eyes ſhe felt a little mortified to find, that neither he nor the counteſs appeared in the circle which had gathered round her. Another glance convinced her, that they were not in the room.

"The heat of this apartment," ſaid the lovely ſufferer, "is inſupportable. "Do, my deareſt Harriet, lend me "your arm, and let me breathe a little "pure

" pure air in the veſtibule." The viſcounteſs complied, and the miſtreſs of the ceremony with ſeveral other ladies accompanied the fair invalid.

Lady Arabella caſt a ſcrutinizing glance upon the ſuite of chambers through which ſhe was led; but ſhe deſcended into the veſtibule without making any diſcovery. It had been converted into an orangery for the occaſion, and decorated with a variety of lamps taſtefully ſuſpended. The many-coloured light trembling on the fragrant exotics, the freſhneſs of the air, the ſtillneſs of the ſcene, and the extenſive view which it admitted of the " ſtars in all their ſplendor" and " the moon walking in brightneſs," afforded a ſtriking contraſt to the glittering but artificial ſcene which they had juſt left. Lady Arabella and her friends were not the only admirers of its enchanting effect,

for

for at the upper end ſtood the counteſs and Fitzoſborne.

"Pray let us go back," ſhrieked lady Arabella, who however did not much doubt their identity. "I am "quite frightened. Somebody is here." The lady of the houſe declared, that it could be nobody whom ſhe could object to, while the charitable viſcounteſs whiſpered, "that it would be rude to "interrupt a private party."

"O! not for the univerſe," exclaimed Arabella. "I would die a thouſand "deaths rather than be rude."

The counteſs advanced with an air of eaſy dignity, which the inquiſitive looks of the other ladies ſoon diſcompoſed. "Bleſs me, ſiſter," ſaid the candid Arabella, "I really did not think it was "you."—"And Edward too," continued the ſignificant lady Fitzoſborne; "how "do you do? There is no ſuch thing

"as

" as catching your attention for one " moment this evening. How came " your austerity to condescend to visit " these tinsel amusements?"

" Pardon me, madam," said Edward bowing respectfully to lady Arabella, " those amusements cannot be tinsel " which have the power of attracting " sterling merit." Her ladyship did not deign to take the least notice of his submission, but continued whispering the countess: " So you have one con-" stant *cecisbeo* I see, and Monteith stays " at home. Very singular, I vow. But " was you not afraid of taking cold " during this long conversation?"

" No," replied Geraldine with re-covered composure; " our conversa-" tion was too interesting for me to " think of cold. What if I should tell " you, Arabella, that some part of it " related to yourself. But you really

" treat

"treat your faithful swain's advances in "too contemptuous a style for me to "begin my requested intercession, or "even to deliver to you a message "from your brother on the same sub-"ject."

The party had now re-entered the house, when the countess, turning, said to Fitzosborne, "You forget Miss Par-"ker."—"Where is Miss Parker?" was the general inquiry. "In the "orangery," said lady Monteith. "No, "madam, I am here," echoed a shrill voice, which issued from one of the ladies who accompanied lady Ara-bella.

"Miss Parker could not have been "left in the orangery," observed the viscountess. "Your ladyship was cer-"tainly mistaken. She came down "stairs with us."

"And

" And ſhe was the firſt who ſupport-
" ed me when I fainted," ſaid lady Arabella, who, in her eagerneſs to detect a ſuppoſed criminal, forgot, that fainting people do not always know what paſſes.

" She certainly accompanied me into
" the orangery," repeated lady Monteith.

Miſs Parker, who was no other than the " antiquated belle" at the opera, now came forward, and with a reſpectful courteſy begged leave to explain:
" I certainly accompanied your lady-
" ſhip and Mr. Fitzoſborne down ſtairs,
" when you did me the honour to aſk
" me; but while your ladyſhip was en-
" gaged with him in looking at the
" ſtars, I found it was very cold, and I
" was afraid of my old attack in my
" ſhoulder; ſo I thought I would ſtep
" and fetch my pellice; and I believe
" your

" your ladyſhip and the gentleman were " too much occupied to perceive that I " was gone."

A ſarcaſtic ſmile, which lady Fillagree's politeneſs could ſcarcely reſtrain her from joining, followed this narrative, when Edward, like Joſeph Surface, promiſed to give a full and ſatiſfactory account of the matter. He ſaid, that on his mentioning that he had obſerved a beautiful Jacobea lily in full blow as they entered, lady Monteith and Miſs Parker had expreſſed a wiſh to pay it more attention; that he had the honour to eſcort them; and that, after admiring the flower, her ladyſhip was ſuddenly ſtruck by the ſplendor of ſome particular conſtellations, when lady Arabella entered.

Another general ſmile enſued, and Geraldine, no longer able to rally her

ſpirits,

ſpirits, ordered her chariot; and, telling Miſs Parker ſhe would ſet her down at her own door, ſhe relieved the ladies from the pain of ſuppreſſed merriment, by taking leave.

CHAP. XXX.

Conſcience, what art thou? Thou tremendous power!
Who doſt inhabit us without our leave;—
How doſt thou light a torch to diſtant deeds!
Make the paſt, preſent, and the future, frown!
How, ever and anon, awake the ſoul,
As with a peal of thunder!

YOUNG.

THE ſuppoſed ſecret, mentioned in my laſt Chapter, was of too much importance to be confined to the diſcoverers. By means of the happy art of innendoes, the initiated ſoon diſſeminated it through the whole circle, in the politeſt manner imaginable. One lady obſerved, that the adventures of the third Eloiſa would ſoon be publiſhed: another affirmed, that it would be called Werter the Second, with a different cataſtrophe: a third wiſhed to read the Chapter on Botany:

a fourth thought that that on aſtronomy would contain the moſt aſtoniſhing diſcovery: a fifth allowed, that aſtronomy and botany were both very ſuitable ſtudies for ſhepherds and ſhepherdeſſes; and every body hoped that the adventures of the poor little lady, who had loſt her pellice, and got the rheumatiſm, would be inſerted. The ſarcaſms of the viſcounteſs were peculiarly piquant; for hers was the moſt ſuſpected character in company; and it is an invariable rule with ladies of her caſt, that the odium with which you beſpatter a neighbour's reputation has a retroactive effect in furbiſhing your own. Her indignation was chiefly pointed at lord Monteith, who, ſhe ſaid, was certainly anxious to obtain the honour of being a cornuto; and her idea was thought to be the more judicious, as it was known to correſpond with the ſentiments of the noble

noble viſcount her huſband. Envy, idleneſs, the love of ſaying good things, and a dearth of converſation, aſſiſted her to propagate the ſtory. For two days the town talked of nothing elſe, and every relater could add circumſtances of freſh atrocity. In two days more, the truth of theſe adventitious circumſtances became doubtful, and, being proved unfounded, the whole fabric fell with them to the ground. At the end of the week every-body was heartily ſorry for the dear miſrepreſented counteſs; and every-body, forgetting the part they had themſelves taken, heartily wiſhed that ſome law might be invented to prevent defamation.—But to return to the object of theſe inquiſitorial proceedings.

The lovely Geraldine plainly perceived the malicious explanation that had been given to an incident which

Fitzosborne had faithfully explained. The love of distinction was, as I have before observed, one of her ruling foibles; but she sought to gratify it by the noblest means. Her spotless fame added lustre to the splendor of her talents and the attractions of her beauty. She had ever been named as one of those few, who, in a degenerate age, afforded a happy instance of the possible union of propriety and fashion. To have the goodly edifice which she had reared with such assiduous care at once destroyed; to have her unsullied name become the jest of witlings and the associate of wilful depravity, was insupportable. Even supposing that the candid hearer would reject the calumnious assertion, she could not endure the very idea of having her character exposed to suspicious discussion. She sat silent in the chariot, the tear of anguish stealing down her cheek; incapable

incapable of attending to Miſs Parker's narrative, whoſe regret about the pellice furniſhed her with a ſubject of lamentation till they arrived in town.

Fitzoſborne read lady Monteith's ſentiments. He rightly judged that this keen ſenſibility would prove injurious to his audacious deſigns; and he determined to exert his inſidious arts to ſubdue it. The earl was not returned from the Houſe. The counteſs wiſhed him good night, and paſſed on to her dreſſing-room. Fitzoſborne followed her to the door. "Excuſe my "anxiety," ſaid he; "your look does "not indicate a wiſh for repoſe. Will "you allow me to ſit with you till "Monteith returns?" She replied, that ſhe was not in ſpirits for company; and after a pauſe, "It is in vain," ſaid ſhe, "to diſguiſe my feelings, Fitz-

" osborne; and you know the cause of
" my distress."

" I know nothing that can justify,
" or at least deserve, those tears. Dearest
" lady Monteith, for Heaven's sake,
" conquer that emotion, which increases
" the misanthropy I long have felt at
" the narrow prejudice and illiberality
" of the world."

" You are always tilting against those
" windmill giants," returned Geraldine
with a languid smile. " It is of the
" spirit of detraction and inconsiderate-
" ness that I complain, of that cruel
" levity, which sports with what is
" dearer than life."

" Nay, now you urge your sensibility
" too far. It is weakness, not delicacy,
" to put our happiness so much in the
" power of others. Have you for-
" gotten that beautiful sentiment, 'The
" con-

" conſcious mind is its own awful
" world?'

" I grant its propriety only with re-
" ſpect to the tortures of guilt; for can
" innocence be inſenſible of the value
" of reputation?"

" It may diſprove ſlander by deſpiſ-
" ing it, and by acting with marked
" contempt of its petty machinations.
" The tale you ſeem to apprehend is
" too poor, too contemptible for be-
" lief. I have but one fear reſpecting
" its public expoſure."

" What fear?"

" If lord Monteith ſhould hear it."

" If he ſhould, what have I to
" dread?"

" The warmth of his character;
" his irritable impetuoſity; his ſuſ-
" picious ——"

" Suſpicious, did you ſay? How
" muſt I be degraded, Mr. Fitzoſborne,

"in his opinion! To ſuſpect me after "four years experienced confidence! "And what muſt the world think of "me, if even my firſt, my deareſt "friend doubts my rectitude?"

"I know that angels are not purer, "and when Monteith recollects himſelf, "his judgment will tell him the ſame. "He is now a little warped; an un- "happy ill-grounded apprehenſion—a "ſmothered ſpark nearly extinguiſhed "by reaſon, which this ridiculous ſtory "may revive;—and ſuſpicion in a cha- "racter like his muſt be terrible."

Geraldine leaned almoſt fainting againſt the wainſcot. A deadly paleneſs was diffuſed over her intelligent face, and her heart panted with apprehenſive terror. None, except a Domitian or a Fitzoſborne, who delight in torture, but muſt have pitied her agonies.

The

The traitor did indeed affect to pity. He dropped upon his knee, and uttered every rhapsodical expression which the most guileful art could dictate. "Dearest "lady Monteith, for Heaven's sake be "composed—my tortured heart bleeds "to see your anguish—most injured—"most lovely sufferer—Oh richly wor-"thy of a better fate—Impart your "anguish to the faithful friend who "would die to relieve it."

The last words recalled her recollection. "Rise, sir," said she with becoming dignity. "My situation does "not call for the active offices of friend-"ship. You say I am injured. In what? "From what motive do you torture me "with suspense? You seem to possess "some fatal secret respecting me. If I "ought to know the evil you allude to, "tell me at once, that I may arm my "soul with fortitude to sustain my trials,

"or detect the calumny which sports "with my peace."

Edward was disconcerted. He had hoped that so much friendship might have surprized her into a little acknowledgment. And he perceived with regret that many a summer's sun must still rise to mature his villany. He had never yet encountered the resistance of a firm superior mind, or so strongly seen the "loveliness of virtue in her own form," or "felt how awful goodness is." Yet, more remorseless than the Prince of Darkness, "he pined not at his own loss."

The sophists, who in these evil days are falsely called enlightened, affect not to palliate their own vices by pleas of necessity and frailty, whatever disguise they may assume to expedite their success with others. Aspiring to a pre-eminence in impiety, which former times

times feared to arrogate, they fin upon principle, promulgate fyftems to juftify iniquity, and profcribe repentance by a morality which overturns every reftraint, and a religion that prohibits nothing but devotion. Combining Pagan fuperftitions with the exploded reveries of irrational theorifts, they place at the head of their world of chance a fupine material God, whom they recognize by the name of Nature, and pretend that its worfhip fuperfedes all other laws human and divine. By the fide of this circumfcribed Deity they erect the idol fhrine of its vicegerent, Intereft; by the monftrous doctrines, that "whatever is profitable is right," that "the end fanctifies the means," and that "human actions ought to be free," they diffolve the bonds of fociety; and, after conducting their bewildered followers through the mazes of folly and

 guilt,

guilt, in ſearch of an unattainable perfection, their views terminate at laſt in that fallacious opiate which infidelity preſents, "the eternal ſleep of death."

When poſterity ſhall know that theſe principles characterize the cloſe of the eighteenth century, it will ceaſe to wonder at the calamities which hiſtory will then have recorded. Such engines are ſufficiently powerful to overturn governments, and to ſhake the deep-founded baſe of the firmeſt empires. Should it therefore be told to future ages, that the capricious diſſolubility (if not the abſolute nullity) of the nuptial tie and the annihilation of parental authority are among the blaſphemies uttered by the *moral* inſtructors of theſe times: ſhould they hear, that law was branded as a vain and even unjuſt attempt to bring individual actions under the reſtrictions of general .ule; that chaſtity was defined

fined to mean only individuality of affection; that religion was degraded into a sentimental effusion; and that these doctrines do not proceed from the pen of *avowed* profligates, but from persons *apparently* actuated by the desire of improving the happiness of the world: should, I say, generations yet unborn hear this, they will not ascribe the annihilation of thrones and altars to the successful arms of France, but to those principles which, by dissolving domestic confidence and undermining private worth, paved the way for universal confusion.

Stimulated by that zeal for making proselytes, which marks the missionaries of these doctrines, Fitzosborne had hoped to goad his victim into the snares of infidelity by the corroding pangs of previous guilt. Her unaffected agony at the idea of her husband's doubting the propriety of her conduct

and the rectitude of her heart, could only be infpired by connubial tendernefs and real delicacy. The blufh of generous indignation which kindled upon her cheek at the fuppofition that Edward's infinuations might proceed from finifter views, and the calm contempt with which fhe treated the little arts of feduction to which female vanity has fometimes yielded, convinced him that all his attempts to overturn her high-feated honour would be ineffectual, unlefs he could weaken the bonds of conjugal attachment, or remove the ftrong bulwark of confcious immortality, which gave energy to her principles and ftability to her virtue. Her native fagacity affured him, that all thefe attempts muft be made with caution; but his poifonous noftrums, once introduced, would work with filent vigour. If the conflict of the paffions fhould not be fufficiently ftormy in her tem-

temperate mind to erafe the belief of future retribution, her thirft after knowledge might entangle her in metaphyfical fubtilties. The love of diftinction and the allurements of example might induce her to add one more to thofe courageous females who conceive that the character of a woman is not entirely divefted of weaknefs till fhe defies Omnipotence; while unrequited tendernefs and unrewarded defert muft eftrange an exquifitely fufceptible heart from its unworthy mafter, and direct its affections to the fpecious blandifhments of an unprincipled impofture.

Fitzofborne's anfwer to Geraldine's fpirited appeal was dictated by the moft confummate art. He protefted that he had no fecret to divulge but what fhe already knew; namely, that lord Monteith had unwarily imbibed fome fufpicious apprehenfions from the marked admi-

admiration which ſir Richard Vernon had paid to her at the opera, and to which the incidental circumſtance of her being in remarkably good ſpirits that evening might contribute. He ſcarcely wondered at his friend's alarm, when he conſidered the free notions of the age, the baronet's libertine principles, the impetuoſity of lord Monteith's temper, and his extreme ſuſceptibility in a point of honour, which in his opinion probably proceeded from the warmth of his conjugal attachment. He begged pardon for too deeply ſympathizing in her uneaſineſs, but owned that his feelings were never proof againſt the magic influence of female tears. The term "injured," which he perceived had alarmed her, was heedleſsly uttered, without any reference, at leaſt any deſigned one, unleſs it alluded to thoſe illiberal ſlanderers who attempted to aſperſe

asperse a character which he verily believed was the only exception to that general carelessness of reputation too strongly characteristic of the manners of the present race of married ladies.

"Calumny, my dear lady Monteith," continued he, "is now considered as "the test of fashion; and, instead of "shrinking from its pestilential attack, "even women of virtue conceive a slan-"derous paragraph in a morning paper "to be a kind of passport to celebrity; "and, pleased with becoming an object "of general attention, they wait very "patiently for time to confute what was "untrue in the report. Your extreme "delicacy (for now that you are a little "recovered I cannot help remarking "that it is too exquisitely susceptible) "and the peculiarity of your lord's dis-"position make me see the consequences "of this affair in a more serious light

"than

" than I ſhould otherwiſe do: but as I " am afraid that neither of you will ever " practiſe the philoſophy which I ſhould " aſſume on this ridiculous occaſion, " I can only ſay, that I ſhall be ready to " purſue any plan you ſhall ſuggeſt for " my conduct. Come, clear that pen- " ſive brow; and be convinced, that " Monteith may ſee other men admire " you without ſuppoſing that you en- " courage their addreſſes."

This ſpeech had the deſired effect. It convinced the counteſs that ſhe ought to conceal from her lord every circumſtance in her own behaviour which excited the animadverſions of others; and while her agitated ſpirits were ſomewhat conſoled by the hope that his diſpleaſure was now wholly confined to Vernon, ſhe ſaw the neceſſity of ext[illegible] caution, leſt it ſhould ultimately point at her. Her apprehen-

ſions

ſions of ſome criminal intention in Fitz-oſborne's paſſionate addreſs were tranſient. The extreme audacity and guilt annexed to the bare idea of his having formed an illicit attachment, and the abſolute impoſſibility of his even *hoping* for ſucceſs, perſuaded her, that his paſſionate language was only, as he affirmed it to be, the unpremeditated ſympathy of ſincere friendſhip; and ſhe now bluſhed at her own indelicacy in doubting, though but for a moment, the rectitude of his heart.

Eſteem and confidence are never ſo powerful as at the moment of removed ſuſpicion. She wanted an adviſer and confidant. Who could ſeem ſo proper to perform that office as the ſagacious, ſentimental Edward? The firſt ſcheme which lady Monteith propoſed to ſtop the circulation of the ſlanderous tale was, that Fitzoſborne ſhould immediately

ately leave the family. The arch-tempter ſignified his perfect acquieſcence; but with deference ſtated, that in his opinion ſuch an apparent coincidence with the prejudice of malevolence would tend to confirm its cenſure; and to his repeated advice to treat the whole ſtory with indifference and bravado, lady Monteith oppoſed her own poignant feelings, which would never permit her to go into company while conſcious that a whiſper was circulated to her diſadvantage. At length a compromiſe was agreed to between the oppoſite opinions, and Geraldine determined to take leave of the gay world with more than philoſophic diſtaſte of its levity and uncharitable aſperity. Forgetting that retirement had ſometimes ſuggeſted the wiſh of introducing her brilliant talents to the notice of more accurate obſervers, the envy, hatred, and detraction which impeded

impeded her career, made her again wiſh to take ſhelter in the quiet undiſputed ſuperiority which Powerſcourt or Monteith preſented. The preſence of caprice and affectation renewed her Lucy's remembrance, rendered the recollected ſweetneſs and ingenuouſneſs of her character ſtill more pleaſing, and ſtimulated her impatience to pour her ſorrows into the boſom of ſoothing friendſhip; or to heal her corroded heart by the gentle balm of parental tenderneſs. The propoſed alliance which had occaſioned her journey to London being to all appearance entirely fruſtrated, ſhe wiſhed to return to the pleaſing occupations of domeſtic life; and the claims of filial duty determined her to take Powerſcourt in her way to Scotland. To prevent any ſuſpicion, that her retreat was in conſequence of a breach between the earl and Fitzoſborne, it

was

was propoſed, that the latter ſhould continue at Portland-place till lord Monteith's parliamentary engagements terminated; and Geraldine entertained a private hope, that her lord's intereſt with miniſtry might procure ſome poſt which would tend to reconcile Edward to the ſevere blow which his fortunes had received by the rejection of lady Arabella; and at the ſame time convince the world, that caprice was not the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of all the Macdonald family.

Fitzoſborne now recurred to the converſation which had really been begun in lady Fillagree's orangery; and he debated the probable event of his renewing his addreſſes with ſo much ſeeming anxiety, and acted the part of the mortified ſwain with ſo much adroitneſs, as entirely removed every ſhadow of ſuſpicion from lady Monteith's mind, engaged

her

her anew in the office of a confoler, and even roufed a degree of felf-accufation at her having dared to fufpect that the morals of the virtuous Edward fell fhort of the perfection to which they pretended. She lamented with pathetic fweetnefs the depraved ftate of female tafte, which gave a coxcomb infinite advantage over a man of fenfe with the diffipated belles of the day; and Fitzofborne, refigning all his hopes of conjugal felicity, with a profound figh declared, that in future he muft tranquillize his troubled foul with the endearing fympathy of female friendfhip. He proceeded with platonic delicacy to draw the mental portrait of fuch a friend as he wifhed to find: carefully including in the enchanting compofition every grace which Geraldine feemed confcious of poffeffing. Superior refinement, and an apprehenfivenefs of even juft

praiſe, was mentioned with emphaſis; and while the orator ſtated the peculiar difficulty in which this elevated faſtidiouſneſs would place a ſuſceptible mind, impelled by warm eſteem to expreſs its admiration, yet reſtrained from ſpeaking by the certainty of offending, the counteſs liſtened with unſuſpecting delight: ſo true is the maxim,

And while he tells her he hates flattery,
She ſays ſhe does ſo, being then moſt flatter'd.

Lord Monteith interrupted the converſation at a late hour. He returned in very high ſpirits, not only elated by the triumph of his party, but with his own particular ſucceſs; having made a neat and appropriate ſpeech, conſiſting of three or four well-turned periods, which was honoured with profound attention. His lordſhip was leſs quick in diſcovering improprieties than in reſenting

ſenting them when pointed out by others. Fitzoſborne's ſitting alone with his lady, at five o'clock in the morning, alarmed him no more than Fitzoſborne's eſcorting her in a correſpondent dreſs to lady Fillagree's fancy-ball. He recounted the events which had taken place in the debate with too much eagerneſs to liſten tot he narrative of her adventures. He only heard with pleaſure, that Vernon paid no attention to her, and that ſhe was perfectly in charity with her *ceciſbeo*. So many agreeable occurrences made him readily conſent to her propoſal of paying her annual viſit to Caernarvonſhire immediately; and he was too ſincere a friend not to enter with eagerneſs into her plan of rendering Edward ſome pecuniary ſervices. His late diſplay of oratorical ability ſeemed to enſure ſucceſs; "for," ſaid he, "though I want nothing

"from Government, why should not "my friends reap some advantage from "the fatigue which I endure in the ser- "vice of my country? Do you think "that they dare refuse me, Geraldine, "when they know how much I am "courted by Opposition?" He conclud- ed by observing, that Edward's talents would do honour to any administration. His appearing in a conspicuous line would also mortify Arabella, and con- vince her that she ought to have respect- ed her brother's *deeper* knowledge of manners and characters, and not have dismissed a lover who was infinitely too good for her.

CHAP. XXXI.

Meanwhile, by Pleaſure's ſophiſtry allur'd,
From the bright ſun and living breeze ye ſtray:
And, far in London's gloomy haunts immur'd,
Brood o'er your fortune's, freedom's, health's decay;
O blind of choice, and to yourſelves untrue!
The young grove ſhoots, their bloom the fields renew,
The manſion aſks its lord, the ſwains their friend;
While he does riot's orgies haply ſhare,
Or tempt the gameſter's dark deſtroying ſnare,
Or to ſome courtly ſhrine with laviſh incenſe bend.

AKENSIDE.

WHILE the earl of Monteith, with all the blunt ſincerity of his ardent character, purſued his friendly but unſucceſsful deſign of ſerving Fitzoſborne, the polite circles were very merry at his lordſhip's expence, every one wondering that he could not ſee what was ſo extremely viſible to every body elſe,

As lady Monteith had by retirement ſubdued the acrimony of competition, even the candour of her rivals returned, and the tide of popular opinion grew ſtill ſtronger in her favour. Large allowances were made for a little vanity and a little indiſcretion. Moſt people ſincerely believed that, after all, her marked predilection for Fitzoſborne was nothing more than a harmleſs flirtation, perhaps entered into out of frolic, or with a view to mortify Arabella. Theſe delicate extenuations were generally concluded by a laugh at his lordſhip's ſtaying in town to vindicate her character, and a fear, that ſuch uncommon good-humour on his part might encourage her to go greater lengths in her *mirth* than ſhe at firſt intended.

The annihilation of domeſtic happineſs opening the faireſt views for Fitzoſborne's ſucceſs, he determined to employ every

engine for its deſtruction. The guarded honour of Geraldine had hitherto rejected his inſinuations to the diſadvantage of her lord with the warmth of confirmed affection, and the indignation which a conſciouſneſs of the inſeparable union between his reputation and her own muſt inſpire. But various inſtances had convinced him, that this "God of "her Idolatry" was vulnerable in a thouſand points; eaſily deceived, eaſily ſeduced, ſoon irritated, and as quickly pacified. The preſence of the counteſs, her ſuperior judgment, and the reſpect for the decencies of life, which his ſtrong attachment to her had inſpired, had hitherto preſerved him from any groſs acts of immorality, and given a decorum to his conduct which juſtified the confidence ſhe always placed in his behaviour. Fitzoſborne too plainly ſaw that there was no innate principle to

preſerve Monteith in the hour of tempta-tion, when his guardian angel was ab-ſent from her charge. Thoſe tempta-tions he reſolved to ſupply; he doubted not his own ability to environ him with ſnares, from which even a firmer virtue would find it difficult to eſcape; and yet at the ſame time to conceal his inſidious interference, and to cover his machina-tions with the proſtituted names of friendſhip, ſentiment, and morality. Though lady Monteith's enlarged un-derſtanding had ſufficient diſcernment to diſcover calumny, and to treat unfound-ed ſuſpicions with contempt, could ſhe reſiſt the evidence of truth? or could her feeling heart ſupport that cruel indifference which a diſſipated huſband always affects to ſhow to the amiable wife whom he injures by his vices? How ſtrong ſuſceptibility at every cir-cumſtance which threatened the dimi-nution

nution of their mutual regard convinced him that she could not. And surely the resentment which a young and beautiful woman must feel at such injurious negligence would render her an easy prey to the wiles of a seducer. To suppose the contrary, was a paradox which his knowledge of the human character would not admit.

It is not my intention to pollute my page by a description of those successful plans of iniquity by which Fitzosborne subverted the principles of the man who really loved him, and felt anxious to render him essential services. Unhappily, the world presents too often the spectacle of one immortal being alluring another to inebriety, or plunging it in depravity, for me to excite surprize by adding, that such actions are not deemed incompatible with the sacred title of a friend. These seducers

have not indeed always the deeper motives which I afcribe to Fitzofborne; but let it be remembered, that the principles he profeffed gave a fanction to his more monftrous atrocity. Private vices are public benefits. Is it not a general advantage, that property fhould be transferred from an indolent fenfualift to an active intelligent enterprifing citizen, who would turn it to beneficial purpofes? Monteith would be juft as happy with his dogs and horfes, the only fphere of enjoyment which his limited underftanding feemed capable of relifhing, though his beautiful wife, and the fair poffeffions with which fhe was endowed, were refigned to fome clever fellow who had wit enough to acquire them. Suppofing the reftraint of confcience conveniently filenced by that fcepticifm which is now efteemed fo liberal, what other principle will you fubftitute to prevent fuch practices?

practices? Succefs foon reconciles the world to the profperous villain. A little declamation will fatisfy fentiment, and even the watchful dragon of honour may be charmed to fleep by honied words. Gratitude, which ufed to rank next to integrity in the fcale of virtues, is now, like its immediate predeceffor, degraded from its proud pre-eminence. Refinement has difcovered, that the giver beftows not from benevolent motives, nor from affection to the receiver, but merely to relieve himfelf from the pain of an uneafy emotion; and it has taught us to infer from thefe premifes, that it would be weaknefs to feel obligation for benefits which wholly proceed from the all-invigorating principle of felf-love.

Entangled in the mazes of an illicit amour, begun in a moment of inebriety, and purfued from want of cou-

rage to be ſingular, and want of energy to be firm, the unhappy Monteith beheld his preſent ſituation with horror, and contemplated his paſt happineſs with vain regret. His little daughters, his Geraldine, his domeſtic tranquillity, his rural amuſements,—how forcible was the contraſt between thoſe guiltleſs pleaſures, and the clamour of a Bacchanalian revel, the corroding inquietude of a gaming-table, and the venal allurements of a courtezan.

Thouſand after thouſand vaniſhed at theſe midnight orgies. The image of his injured wife and ſupplicating infants conſtantly roſe to his view; but they only came to increaſe his deſperation, not to reſtrain his madneſs. The words, "One "more bottle, and another ſong! What, "Monteith a flincher? Come, my lord; "luck muſt change; make one more "ſpirited effort:" and, "Can the dear-

"eſt

"eſt of men, for whom I have refuſed "ſuch liberal offers, deſert me?" Such expreſſions for med the magic ſpells whoſe powerful incantations enthralled a mind, reduced to the deplorable ſtate of acting the part it abhorred, and adopting the vices it deſpiſed, leſt the votaries of diſſipation ſhould ſuſpect that he wanted courage to be wicked.

Fitzoſborne did not expoſe his untainted reputation by *appearing* in theſe ſcenes of depravity. He contented himſelf with pointing out parties which he entreated his lordſhip to avoid, or with mentioning inſtances of ſurpriſing turns of luck at the gaming-table which it would be folly in any one to expect. He exclaimed againſt Mrs. Harley's infamy, but acknowledged that ſhe was in the higheſt faſhion; that ſhe had rejected a much larger ſettlement than what ſhe now ſolicited from Monteith,

which he hoped his lordſhip would have reſolution to refuſe; and yet, after all, as the ſtrong bias of the paſſions ſeemed to point out that ſuch temporary engagements were congenial to our natures, their criminality muſt wholly depend upon the circumſcribed, and perhaps erroneous, ſyſtems of political juriſprudence. He always concluded theſe powerful diſſuaſions by urging the peculiar ſeverity of lady Monteith's principles, and the conſequent neceſſity of concealing his miſconduct from her. He conjured him to haſten to Powerſcourt; and then added, what he knew would negative the propoſal, "How "will you ſupport the tears and the re-"proofs of that injured woman? For I "fear, my friend, that in ſpite of every "prudent precaution, your pale deject-"ed looks, embarraſſed manner, and "conſtrained vivacity, cannot fail of

"attract-

"attracting her apprehen ve observa-
"tion."

While the cruel machinations of Fitz-osborne thus assailed the honour of Geraldine by vitiating the mind of her husband, the destined victim of his worse than murderous designs enjoyed the soothing consolation of pouring her sorrow into the attentive ear of friendship. Ignorant of the severer trials which immediately awaited her, the tranquillity of rural scenes, the benevolent simplicity of her revered father, the dignified resignation of Mr. Evans,—and the interesting sweetness of the amiable Lucy, conspired to calm that painful conflict which undeserved calumny and disappointed hope had excited in her soul. The early carol of the lark, the dying fall of the nightingale, the kindling glory of a summer's morning, the reviving freshness of the evening zephyr,

the various delights which the country affords, and the attractive ſimplicity of its uncontaminated inhabitants, inſpired lady Monteith with ſtrong indignation againſt that faſtidious taſte which, while it degrades the majeſtic operations of Nature with the epithets of ordinary and vulgar, or paſſes them with ſtupid inſenſibility, purſues the celebrity required by the conſtruction of a carriage or the adjuſtment of a robe. Her cenſures againſt this petty ambition were, however, too warm to be the dictates of cool judgment, and evidently proved, that the fair declaimer had been once included in the frivolous groupe who pay a blind idolatry to popular eſteem. Diſappointment inſpired other notions; and, guided by this new impulſe, ſhe appeared once in her converſations with Miſs Evans to lean to the dangerous doctrine of Fitzoſborne. " When I re-" flect,"

"flect," said she, "on the evanescent "nature of reputation; that it is acquired "without solicitude, and lost without "guilt; that it is the sport of calumny, and "the battery from which envy mortally "wounds the peace of innocence, I feel "convinced that it is beneath the at- "tention of a well-governed mind."

The conversation had been previously confined to the caprices of fashion, and Miss Evans was surprized that it should produce such a serious conclusion; for to this genuine child of Nature the eclat annexed to the invention of a becoming turban, or even the honour of an innumerable party, seemed unworthy of a moment's anxiety. She therefore fixed her intelligent eyes upon her friend, and asked her to what she alluded in this reflection?

"My own sad story," said Geraldine, "is ever predominant in my mind.

"Even while I am enjoying the de-
"lights of theſe beloved peaceful ſcenes,
"I cannot for one moment forget that
"I am now a mark for public ridicule;
"and I am endeavouring to derive
"ſome conſolation from thoſe ſenti-
"ments which a gentleman, a very
"ſenſible man, and a friend of lord
"Monteith's, has frequently ſuggeſted."

"They can only apply," ſaid Lucy,
"to the caſe of thoſe who place their
"*ultimate* hopes in the applauſe of the
"world. They have nothing to do
"with the well-grounded mind, which,
"while it purſues the ſteady path of
"duty, is pleaſed with being encouraged
"on its journey by the modeſt voice of
"well-earned praiſe. Far be it from
"me, my Geraldine, to ſeek to diminiſh
"your conſolations. Innocence allows
"you to poſſeſs a very ſuperior one;
"and whil. your life diſproves accuſa-
"tions,

" tions, you have no cause to be de-
" pressed. Yet the watchful suscepti-
" bility of female honour cannot but
" feel every attack upon its character;
" and it most impatiently longs to refute
" the censures which its purity abhors.
" Lord Monteith's friend, I suppose,
" only made general observations. He
" could not allude to your particular
" story."

" They were the observations of
" Fitzosborne," said lady Monteith
gravely.

" Of Fitzosborne?" interrogated
Lucy. " I have heard you describe
" him as one of the most enlightened,
" uncorrupted, and amiable of men:
" the person too, respecting whom your
" conduct is censured."

" It is exactly as you describe. He
" is thus deserving, and I am so ac-
" cused."

" Does

" Does a fixed contempt for the good-
" will of that maſs of his fellow-crea-
" tures which is called the world, im-
" ply this ſuperior merit? The world,
" I have heard my dear father often ſay,
" judges right, but from wrong pre-
" miſes. It is haſty and raſh, not diſ-
" paſſionate and reflecting. It kindles
" into indignation at a ſpecious tale: it
" loads a ſuſpected character with op-
" probrium; but however falſe its in-
" ference, however miſtaken its judg-
" ment, its errors always lean to the
" ſide of juſtice and virtue. And I am
" the more inclined to pay a deference
" to my father's opinion, becauſe I find
" his idea of that aggregate body of
" which I am an individual confirmed
" by my own feelings."

" I ſhall only join the general deciſion
" of the world, which you ſo reverence,"
replied the counteſs, " when I found the
" praiſes

"praiſes of Mr. Fitzoſborne. To the "manners and the exterior of the moſt "finiſhed gentleman, he adds the in-"formation of the ſcholar, and the pro-"fundity of the philoſopher. Perhaps "his ardent love of truth may urge him "to too great a contempt for eſtabliſhed "rules; and you know, Lucy, we muſt "not expect ſuperior minds to pay a "ſcrupulous attention to the little "punctilios which cuſtom exacts from "ordinary characters. He is actuated "by the moſt exalted views, and his "life is the nobleſt comment upon his "opinions."

The limited obſervation of Miſs Evans had never diſcovered ſuch a being as lady Monteith deſcribed; and ſhe regarded the delineation of its diſtinguiſhed properties with ſomewhat of the ſame kind of ſcrupulous curioſity with which we peruſe the deſcription of

the

the unicorn and the kraken; not abso-lutely denying that such things may exist, but wishing to have their reality more clearly identified. Her wish was soon gratified, and this human phœnix was introduced at Powerscourt by an event in which chance (the modern term for Providence) had a smaller share than *ostensibly* appeared.

The post always arrived at sir William's in the afternoon; and though the good baronet had nothing of the bashaw in his character, and was by no means an adept in the science of politics, he constantly exercised an unlimited authority over the newspaper, the contents of which he regularly recited, in an audible voice, to the party assembled round his hospitable board. The journal of passing occurrences which found admission at sir William's, was generally uncontaminated by private slander, party abuse,

abufe, or fulfome panegyric, and fimply a plain narrative of the events of the day. It *happened*, however, that after lady Monteith had fpent about four months at her father's, the following paragraph found admittance:

" It is rumoured in the polite circles, " that a certain minifterial nobleman, in " the vicinity of P******d Place, finds " fufficient attractions in the beau- " tiful Mrs. Harley to confole him for " his recent difgrace; while a fair in- " conftant is trying, whether the keen " air of the C*********fhire moun- " tains may not be beneficial to a con- " fumptive reputation. It is faid, that " lord M*******'s fettlements on his " new flame are uncommonly liberal."

Sir William was not verfed in the language of initials and afterifks; and was not in poffeffion of the decyphering gloffary which a knowledge of polite

fcandal

ſcandal ſupplies. After two or three attempts to unravel the enigma, he delivered it to his daughter, with a requeſt that ſhe would tell him what it meant. A crimſon bluſh and a dying paleneſs alternately took poſſeſſion of her face while ſhe peruſed the paragraph. After coolly obſerving, that it was ſome very ill-natured nonſenſe, ſhe complained of faintneſs from the heat of the room, a circumſtance which her ſituation, being near her fourth confinement, might render oppreſſive. Miſs Evans's arm was ready to lead her to her own apartment, at the door of which ſhe intreated her friend to leave her, and to ſuperintend the backgammon party in her room, as ſhe much feared ſhe ſhould not be able to rejoin them that evening.

No alarm was excited that night by this circumſtance. Sir William's communications had been too confuſed to

con-

convey any explanation to his auditors, and any future appeal to the newſpaper for information was impoſſible, for it had ſuddenly diſappeared during the buſtle occaſioned by lady Monteith's faintneſs. But ſince the butler and the houſekeeper were both very great politicians, and very anxious to inſpect the conduct of adminiſtration, this circumſtance too frequently happened to bear at this time any myſterious air.

Geraldine's indiſpoſition wore next morning a more ſerious aſpect. Her maid owned, that ſhe had been extremely reſtleſs and agitated all night, and her pulſe indicated conſiderable fever. Sir William's parental tenderneſs took alarm. The moſt eminent medical aſſiſtance which the country afforded was called in, and an expreſs was diſpatched to town to ſummon her huſband.

The

The petrifying power of vice requires time before it can render the heart completely callous. Lord Monteith had not yet forgot his inimitable Geraldine, the mother of his pretty little girls, the founder of James-town, and the benign enchantrefs whofe magic powers had converted the wild unfrequented fhores of Loch Lomond into the refidence of plenty, elegance, and happinefs. His recollection of the guiltlefs pleafures once enjoyed in her fociety aggravated his fears for her fafety; nor could a thoufand Mrs. Harleys detain him from her bedfide. Endeavouring by the fpeed of his return to atone for the criminality of his abfence, relays of horfes were ordered upon the road, and the exertions of the poftboys were ftimulated by additional douceurs. But lord Monteith is not the only furious driver that has found it impoffible to travel

travel from himſelf. New to the ſug-geſtions of remorſe, yet unable to divert the pain of its ſcorpion-ſting by the fal-lacious juſtification of comparing his own conduct with that of other men of faſhion, his troubled imagination con-tinually placed before his eyes the frightful image of an amiable wife mur-dered by his vicious indifference; and his thoughts were alternately occupied by curſing his own folly, and franticly addreſſing Heaven to ſpare a life which he now felt to be infinitely dearer than his own.

Such a ſituation called for the ame-liorating offices of friendſhip, and the ſentimental, diſpaſſionate Fitzoſborne had claimed that pious taſk. To abate the reader's indignation againſt that gentleman's conduct, I muſt affirm, that it was afterwards ſatisfactorily proved, that the fatal paragraph which I have quoted was not communicated

to the newſpaper editor in a handwriting that bore the *leaſt* reſemblance to Edward's. I will alſo own, that his emotions during the journey to Powerſcourt were almoſt as poignantly diſtreſſing as thoſe of his fellow-traveller. Conſcience, indeed, was leſs loud in her accuſations, becauſe her ſenſibility had by frequent repreſſion been rendered more callous. But the probable diſappointment of thoſe plans of aggrandiſement which he had purſued with ſuch wicked diligence, raiſed his apprehenſion; and he regretted, that human ſcience had not yet reached its ſummit of perfection, by preſenting to him the immortalizing elixir that would enable him to diſpute with death for the poſſeſſion of the victim whom he had marked for a more dreadful deſtination.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.